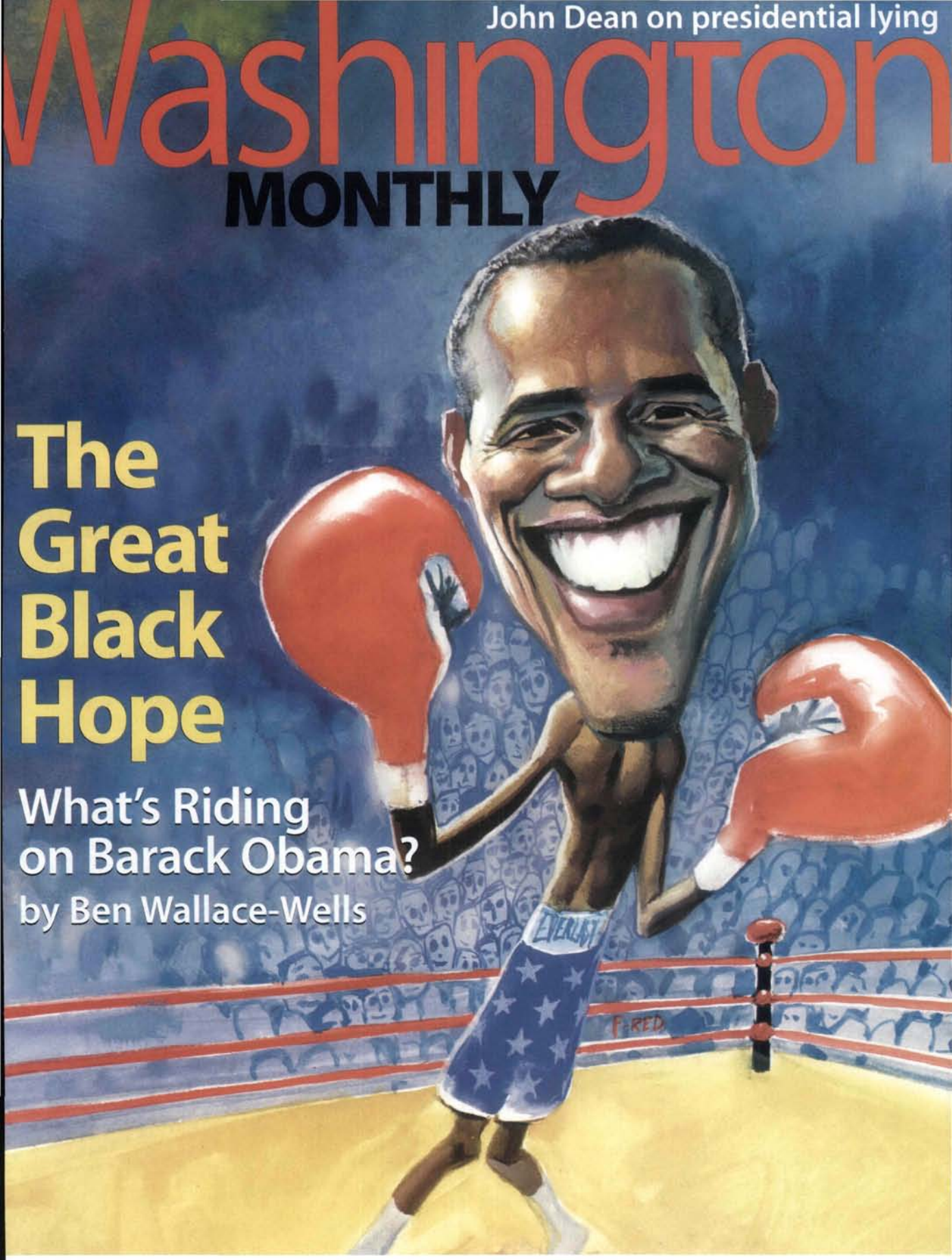
John Dean on presidential lying

Washington MONTHLY



The Great Black Hope

What's Riding on Barack Obama?

by Ben Wallace-Wells

November 2004 $4.50

Is the FBI too PC? • Why men grill • Why women pluck

How Tom Delay changed Washington • Against Bernard Lewis

Phillip Carter on the Abu Ghraib whitewash

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*"ONE OF THE GREAT WORKS ON SOCIAL POLICY OF THIS GENERATION."

—**DANIEL SCHORR**, *senior news analyst, National Public Radio*

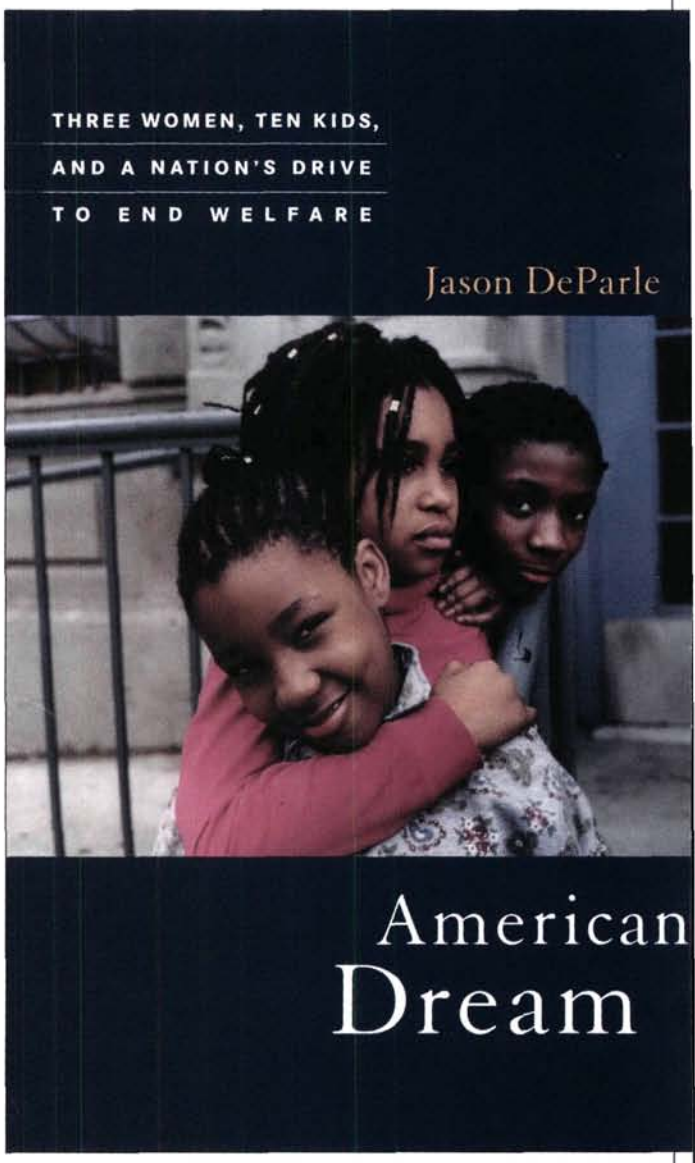
"*American Dream* is a singular achievement. . . . This is must reading for anyone concerned about the limitations of American social policy in addressing the problems of the urban poor." —**WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON**

"With equal measures of compassion and dispassion, Jason DeParle confronts us inescapably with the reality of poverty in America."
—**DANIEL SCHORR***

"DeParle's book delivers its haunting news with a jolt. It informs us about the continuation of a dire national tragedy with a skillfulness that demands admiration."
—**RANDALL KENNEDY**

"The best account of the effort to reform or end welfare. . . . Convictions and prejudices of the left and the right all fall before this meticulously researched book; it will become a classic account of the lives of the American poor."
—**NATHAN GLAZER**

"An essential and ugly American story richly reported and brilliantly rendered."
—**ROGER WILKINS**



VIKING A MEMBER OF PENGUIN GROUP (USA)

WWW.PENGUIN.COM

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Washington MONTHLY

Volume 36, No. 11
November 2004

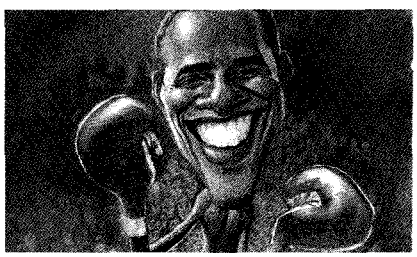
FEATURES

4 **Tilting at Windmills**
Faster than a speeding snail ... Ahead of the curve ... Side effects ... Pretty in pink ... Bush's brain...
by Charles Peters

13 **Bernard Lewis Revisited**
What if Islam isn't an obstacle to democracy in the Middle East, but the secret to achieving it?
by Michael Hirsh

20 **The Road to Abu Ghraib**
The biggest scandal of the Bush administration began at the top.
by Phillip Carter

30 ***COVER STORY:***


Fred Harper

The Great Black Hope
What's riding on Barack Obama?
by Benjamin Wallace-Wells

37 **Stunned Guns**
How we've made the FBI too timid to bug mosques—or Ken Lay's Office.
by Richard Gid Powers

44 **Grill Seeker**
How George Foreman, Ted Nugent, and Bobby Flay taught me to be a real suburban man.
by Joshua Green

60 **Meanwhile in America...**
by Joe Sacco

UPFRONT

2 **Letters**

9 **10 Miles Square**

Writers' Block
What will Bush-bashing book authors do if Kerry wins?
by Matthew Quirk

Clear and Present Danger
The hawks relaunch a Cold-War relic.
by Jaideep Singh

ON POLITICAL BOOKS

47 **The Post-Truth Presidency**
The unintended consequences of presidential lying.
by John W. Dean

50 **Tour of Beauty**
A hundred years in the arms race to acquire newer, better weapons of cosmetic enhancement.
by Christina Larson

53 **Guerrillas in the Mist**
What the Pentagon can learn from the Green Berets.
by Phillip Carter

56 **Bully Pulpit**
How Tom DeLay changed Washington.
by Jamie Malanowski

58 **Bloc Patrol**
Maybe there's no such thing as the "Latino vote."
by Steve Cieslewicz

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Letters

Party pooper

How can Grover Norquist ("The Democratic Party is Toast," September) call the Democratic Party the party of government when the growth of government and government spending have exploded under the control of our modern GOP? Little did I know four years ago that "compassionate conservatism" were really code words for more government.

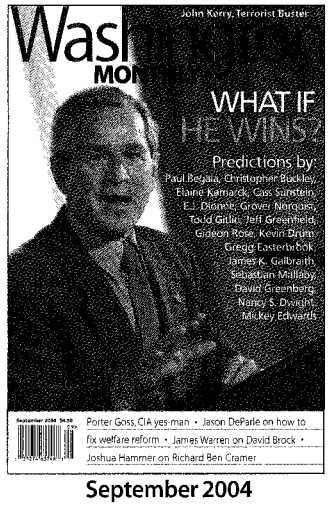
Rod Blum
Conservative columnist for
The Telegraph Herald, Dubuque, Iowa

Norquist is one of those puzzling people who is obviously smart but who makes illogical connections like attributing the drop in crime to the increase in the number of states that allow people to carry concealed pistols. His triumph is in belief over fact, or rather in shaping facts to his beliefs. I don't disagree that the reelection of Bush/Cheney will demolish the Democratic Party as we know it today, but it will happen only if delusions like "progress in Iraq" trump fact.

Peter Page
Via email

I am not familiar with Grover Norquist, so perhaps I'm missing some form of satire, but I'm genuinely perplexed by his statement: "Bush wants to create Retirement Savings Accounts to allow every American to sock away up to $5,000 for retirement tax-free; similarly, the president has proposed Lifetime Savings Accounts allowing Americans to save $7,500 for education, housing, or health costs during their working lives."

Bush doesn't need to "create" RSA's—we already have them: They're called IRAs. So, is the proposal just to increase the amount that can be donated to an IRA? Or are the generous amounts referred to supposed to grow tax-free and not be taxed at all when you withdraw them (as



September 2004

opposed to IRAs)?

Or perhaps, an extra zero or two got dropped from the figures? Could it be that maybe we could "sock away" $50,000 and $75,000 tax-free? Realistically, $75,000 isn't going to go far toward education or health.

If neither of the above scenarios is what was meant, then gee, $5,000 and $7,500 socked away to be drawn upon in 10, 20, or 30 years … Don't blow it all at once.

Lisa Gibson
Ossining, NY

Grover is dead on. It's not that John Kerry is simply a bad candidate, or that Karl Rove is simply better at manipulating public sentiment than Mary Beth Cahill. It's not that Republicans are spending more money and time and effort on their campaigns than Democrats. It's the ideas. Republicans are the party of ideas. And they have better ones than do the Democrats. Democrats have become the party of the rusty, antiquated ideas of FDR and LBJ.

Will Franklin
Houston, Texas

The right man

After reading Nancy Dwight and Mickey Edwards's article ("Bush Becomes a Moderate, Really," September), I have to conclude that they are engaged in wishful thinking rather than rational analysis. What behavior of the administration to date would make them think that Bush would make such a radical change in the way he governs? If he acted like he had a mandate in 2000 when a questionable Supreme Court decision declared the winner of a disputed election whose popular vote he had lost, it seems more likely that he would take reelection as an endorsement of how he has governed so far and decide to follow the same path even more aggressively. If this wishful thinking is why Republican moderates plan to vote for Bush despite his record of failure—which the authors tacitly acknowledge by indicating that Bush would govern differently given a second chance—then I am disappointed beyond measure.

Michael Myers
Lutherville, Md.

Deficit squawk

Congratulations to Sebastian Mallaby ("The Deficit Conquers All," September), who provides a very sobering account of what will happen to America. However, the United States is no different from most of the Western world. We all face the same problem. Western countries, particularly the Anglo-Saxon countries, have been spending like drunken sailors, financed by massive amounts of credit or spending savings supposedly locked away for Social Security, superannuation, and medical liabilities in the future.

This has led to financial asset bubbles that in turn require even more spending just to purchase them in the first place. As monetary authorities hit the printing presses in order to keep these asset bubbles afloat, the worse the bubbles become, and so on and so on. But this is what capitalism is all about.

The car crash round the corner for most of the Western governments is the fact that their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

demographics will not be able to support this scenario for long. The baby boomers are getting old and their expectations for retirement are exaggerated.

No matter what democratically elected governments do from here on, it is probably too late to avoid the crash, using any of the above author's suggested methods, however honorable and prudent they are. The eventual solution will be the lowering of Western countries' Standard of Living which will be forced on us.

Gavin Wallace
Via email

Noise complaint

James Warren's determination to find fault with *The Republican Noise Machine* by David Brock has forced him to present arguments that are either specious or irrelevant ("What Ailes Us," September).

If the invisible hand of the media market were the ultimate arbiter of content, as Warren suggests, then we would all be listening to Howard Stern and watching pornography. One also does not have to assume a sinister conspiracy to accept Brock's documented description of organized cooperation among partisans of the right to bend the means of communication to their ends. Even Warren admits their success.

Further, while it is probably true that most people get their information from local news and newspapers, the news agenda is set by a national press increasingly intimidated by the threat of being labeled liberal. Finally, as Warren surely knows, the efforts of Michael Moore, MoveOn.org, and their ilk can hardly compare to the decades-long, billion-dollar industry that promotes the other side.

Maria Leavey
Arlington, Va.

Money talk

This is in response to the item, "Higher Ed, Inc." by Charles Peters in "Tilting" (September). I am a full-time college instructor making $38,000 per year before taxes, and I do not have tenure or other job protection. Almost no one in academia who "just" teaches has anything other than a temporary job, renewable from year to year. I mention this not because I think it's wrong but to emphasize that I am not a fat-cat defending his largesse.

In my state, about 45 percent of my university's total budget used to be provided by the state government in the 1970s; now the figure is about 13 percent. It's a good thing for America that universities have preserved their research capacity by entrepreneurial means, because university research is of more than cultural benefit. A recent statement by *Scientific American* magazine attributed 30 percent of America's current GDP to one academic field: quantum physics.

States are shorting K-12 education in similar fashion. Because of dwindling state support, and concomitant reliance on property taxes, some school districts in my state have three times as much to spend per child as some inner-city and rural districts do.

My university is a land-grant institution, founded under a philosophy which held that an educated populace benefits the nation as a whole. Now that about 130,000 high school valedictorians per year cannot afford to go on to college, I think it's safe to surmise that our values must be different today. Today's college population consists of rich kids, which is why they can demand and get campus environments that include Jacuzzis and similar amenities.

Floyd Hummel
Via email

Washington MONTHLY

Paul Glastris
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Markos Kounalakis
PUBLISHER AND PRESIDENT

Charles Peters
FOUNDING EDITOR

Editors: Nicholas Confessore, Amy Sullivan, Benjamin Wallace-Wells
Managing Editor: Christina Larson
Books Editor: Kukula Kapoor Glastris
Contributing Writers: Kevin Drum, Joshua Micah Marshall
Vice President, Development: Amy L. Keltz
Associate Publisher: Carl Iseli
Contributing Editors: Jonathan Alter, Thomas N. Bethell, Tom Bethell, Katherine Boo, Taylor Branch, Matthew Cooper, Michelle Cottle, Gregg Easterbrook, John Eisendrath, James Fallows, Joshua Green, Mickey Kaus, Phil Keisling, Michael Kinsley, Nicholas Lemann, Suzannah Lessard, Arthur Levine, Jon Meacham, Stephanie Mencimer, Matthew Miller, Timothy Noah, Joseph Nocera, Leonard Reed, John Rothchild, Stephen Pomper, Jonathan Rowe, David Segal, Walter Shapiro, Joshua Wolf Shenk, Nicholas Thompson, Steven Waldman, Robert Worth
Editorial Advisory Board: Nicholas Lemann, *Chair*, Clara Bingham, Debra Dickerson, James Fallows
Founders' Board: Charles W. Bailey, Russell Baker, James David Barber, Edgar Cahn, David Halberstam, Richard Reeves, Hugh Sidey
Editorial Assistant: Soyoung Ho
Editorial Fellows: Matthew Harwood, Justin Peters
Business Manager: Claire Iseli
Assistant to the Publisher: Velia Amarasingham
Assistant to the Business Manager: Nisha Kapadia
Office Manager: India Baker
Fact-checker: Timothy Dickinson
Proofreader: Sally Cutler

Subscription Rates: U.S. and possessions: one year, $44.95; two years, $79.95; three years, $109.95. For Canadian and foreign subscriptions, add $10 for surface delivery; air mail delivery add $32. Back issues, $5. The Washington Monthly is indexed in the Book Review Index, Political Science Abstracts, Public Affairs Information Service, the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, and Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory and may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Published monthly except combined Jan./Feb. and July/Aug. issues by The Washington Monthly, LLC, wholly owned by W.M. Corporation, a District of Columbia nonprofit corporation.

Reprint Rights: Please call Soyoung Ho at 202-393-5155, or send an email to editors@washingtonmonthly.com.

Subscription Service: Please call our customer service department toll-free at (877) 765-4849, or send an email to service@washingtonmonthly.com.

Advertising Sales: Please call Ron Burr or Joe Whistler, advertising sales managers, at (703)-893-3632, or send an email to rburr@burr-mediagroup.com.

Services for the Visually Handicapped: Please contact Kathy Bouening of Volunteer Services for the Visually Handicapped, at 414-286-3039, to request a recording of this magazine for $2.25 per cassette.

© 2004 The Washington Monthly LLC.. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.

ISSN 0043-0633. Postmaster: Send change of address to The Washington Monthly, 733 15th Street., NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C. and at additional mailing offices. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope unless emailed:

Editorial offices: 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005; tel: 202-393-5155 / fax: 202-393-2444
Publishing offices: 916 Kearny Street, San Francisco, CA 94133; tel: 415-402-0252 / fax: 415-402-0922
www.washingtonmonthly.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tilting at **Windmills**

by **Charles Peters**, founding editor

Faster than a speeding snail

How quickly has the Bush administration moved to fix the obvious holes in the Homeland Security net? You will recall that on 9/11, it seemed that no one was in charge of defending Washington. It took 50 minutes after the first World Trade Center tower was hit before an Air Force fighter reached Washington, which unfortunately happened to be 10 minutes after another plane crashed into the Pentagon. Three years and nine days later, on September 20, 2004, there was this news from the AP: "The Pentagon has established a new military headquarters whose mission is to defend the nation's capital."

This item is classified

"The federal government last year spent $6.5 billion to create 14 million new classified documents, a 60 percent increase over 2001," reports Audrey Hudson of *The Washington Times*. Suspecting that the Bush administration might be over-classifying, Reps. David Obey (D-Wisc.) and Martin Sabo (D-Minn.) recently complained to the Government Accountability Office: "We are baffled as to how a telephone list containing only government phone numbers can be determined to contain sensitive information." Maybe they haven't heard about the Department of Homeland Security stamping "Official Use Only" on a document inviting workers to a going-away party featuring "Krispy Kreme doughnuts and coffee."

Missing the point

During the 2000 campaign, the press gave more attention to Gore's exaggerations than to Bush's lies. Will it turn out to have made similar errors of emphasis this time? The CBS scandal does not inspire optimism.

Within a few days after "60 Minutes" broadcast its scoop about George W. Bush's now-and-then service in the National Guard, the story for the rest of the media became almost exclusively not about Bush but about the failings of CBS, Dan Rather, and his producer Mary Mapes. Evidence that the facts alleged in the story were true was either ignored or buried. Consider the first mention in *The Washington Post* that Col. Killian's secretary, Marianne Knox, had confirmed that the documents accurately reflected the views of Col. Killian. The *Post*'s Howard Kurtz put this fact in the 12th paragraph of a story, the preceding paragraphs of which had dealt not with whether the story was true, but whether the letters were fake.

Actually, Rather's original story had supplied a long-missing piece of the puzzle about Bush's National Guard service. It had been rumored for years that Ben Barnes, a former lieutenant governor of Texas and longtime political powerhouse in the state, had pulled strings to get Bush into the Guard. Rather now had Barnes on camera confirming for the first time that this was true. If Rather had nothing else, this should have been news. But it was totally ignored or buried in the rest of the media's account of the CBS story. For example, in a long *Post* story by Kurtz and two of his colleagues that began on page one, Barnes's revelation was not mentioned until the continued portion on page 27 and even then not until the 12th paragraph. On that same page, Marianne Knox's statement "I know Dan Rather is right" does not appear until 40 paragraphs later.

In a more recent *Post* article by Jennifer Frey about Mary Mapes, CBS' producer of the Guard story, the possibility that Mapes's story is true does not appear until the 35th paragraph. I guess you could call this an improvement. But of course, the point of all this is that far too few in the media seemed to get that the truth of the allegations about Bush were equally as important as the authenticity of the documents. The *Post*'s Anne Applebaum argues that the two issues are inseparable. She's wrong. One story is about CBS, the other about Bush. And it is that story that the *Post* and most of the rest of the media blew.

Musical comedy

One of the great musical comedies, "Of Thee I Sing," was revived at New Jersey's Paper Mill Playhouse this September. I wish I could have been there, because the show contains three of my favorite songs—"Who Cares?," "Love is Sweeping the Country," and, of course, "Of Thee I Sing." Indeed, I once used the latter two in a show I did in summer stock during a brief career in the theater when I was in my early twenties. The play was Moliere's "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme." I also threw in a couple of Cole Porter songs I liked. This may help explain the brevity of my stay in show business.

Pretty in pink

"Republicans are way freakier, probably because they are more

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

repressed," one Manhattan sex worker told *New York* magazine after the recent GOP convention. Another, a dominatrix, said: "It always surprises me how many of my clients are not just Republicans but Bush supporters. I think, 'You want me to force you down on your knees when you're in a pink tutu.'" Who do you think would look best in a pink tutu? Karl Rove? Rummy? Wolfowitz?

Ahead of the curve

Speaking of Wolfowitz, did you know that in the Jan. 22, 2001, issue of *The New Yorker*, Nicholas Lemann's "Letter From Washington" was titled "The Iraq Factor" and identified Wolfowitz as the leader of many officials, "including people close to George W. Bush," who were determined to overthrow Saddam Hussein. This article, more than a year ahead of the pack, has to win the Peters Prize for Early Identification of the Administration's Obsession With Iraq.

Gynecologists v. radiologists

Speaking of Peters Prizes, the one for medical reporting goes to *The Wall Street Journal*. In just the last couple of months, *Journal* reporters have identified "Two Simple Tests that can Identify Strokes, but Few Get Them," exposed inflated hospital bills in which uninsured patients are victimized by big markups, and revealed that most gynecologists do not tell their patients about an alternative to hysterectomies. The alternative is a treatment for fibroid tumors called Uterine Artery Embulization, or UAE. A recent survey of 100 UAE patients found that 79 had not heard of this procedure from gynecologists but from other sources. Why are the gynecologists so reluctant to impart this information? They would lose the $2,000 fee they charge for a hysterectomy. UAEs are performed by radiologists.

Side effects

Another story in the *Journal*, this about the recent Vioxx recall, calls to mind a point this magazine made four years ago (Stephen Pomper's "Drug Rush," May 2000) about the limited resources the FDA devotes to "studying the safety of medical products after they're already approved." Most of the FDA's budget goes to the drug approval process, with little left for finding out about any harm the drugs do once they're in use. This, of course, reflects the priorities of the drug companies. But the damage it does is not a trivial matter. "Adverse reactions to drugs kill more than one hundred thousand Americans a year," reports the *Journal*'s Anna Wilde Matthews, and injure another 1.5 million badly enough to require hospitalization.

Bad blood

Another FDA problem was recently revealed by Sheryl Atkinson of "CBS Evening News." It seems that a patient, Rodney English, died in an Atlanta hospital from a transfusion of mislabeled blood. An FDA investigation found, according to Atkinson, "a series of errors at the Atlanta Red Cross in blood typing and testing, three other deaths the Red Cross failed to investigate properly and screening problems—donors allowed to give blood even after repeatedly testing positive for illnesses like Hepatitis C." But these facts were deleted from the FDA's public report. One official told Atkinson that the Red Cross had insisted on the deletion and the FDA complied.

Friends in high places

A similar incident happened in the Pentagon. When legal officers at Air Force headquarters heard about unethical practices by First Command Financial Planning, a private company that sells mutual funds to military personnel, they asked military lawyers around the country for reports of "unethical or overly aggressive" sales tactics. They also expressed concern about excessive fees charged by the mutual funds—fees so high as to consume half of the investors' first-year investment. Within three weeks, this investigation was quashed. First Command complained, and it turned out to have friends at the top. The result, according to Anna B. Henriques of *The New York Times*:

"The Air Force issued a retraction, which it had allowed the company to edit. It gave the com-

PRETTY IN PINK

A dominatrix told *New York* magazine: "It always surprises me how many of my clients are not just Republicans but Bush supporters. I think, 'You want me to force you down on your knees when you're in a pink tutu.'" Wonder who would look best in a pink tutu? Karl Rove? Rummy? Wolfowitz?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pany a letter, signed by the Air Force's top legal officer, after letting the company edit that, too."

Leaving plenty of children behind

I assume that George W. Bush, like most members of his administration, is a faithful reader of the conservative *Washington Times*. If so, I hope his modest curiosity managed to get him to page 12 of the August 30 edition, so that he could see what has happened to his No Child Left Behind program. There he would have found this headline: "Twelve million languish in failing public schools, report says." The accompanying article cites this conclusion from the Education Commission of the States: At least one-quarter of the nation's public schools fail to meet "adequate yearly progress" standards under the No Child Left Behind act. And, as even those right-wingers at the *Times* must acknowledge, "these schools predominantly served minority and economically disadvantaged students."

What's more, the words "at least" were used because only 19 states have turned in complete progress reports. "Thirty-one states and the District [of Columbia] have provided only partial reports." So the situation is probably much worse than even the already-dire-enough headline suggests.

The wrong way home

One reason the District is lagging can be found in a recent report about the local education office by D.C. auditor Deborah K. Nichols, who found that "certain employees are able to manipulate the system to obtain reimbursement for questionable travel ... of a personal or self-serving nature rather than the performance of official business." One trip questioned was a two-night stay by five employees in Richmond where the sole work done was attending a meeting that concluded at 1 p.m. on the first day. Richmond is 90 miles from Washington. One receipt submitted for the trip was from a gas station in North Carolina—a state which, for those who slept through geography class, is definitely not located between Washington and Richmond. But at least in this case, an itemized expense report was made. Such reports, according to Jim McElhatton of *The Washington Times*, "were not submitted for 89% of the trips taken by [education] officials."

Maybe you haven't heard about the Department of Homeland Security stamping "Official Use Only" on a document inviting workers to a going-away party featuring "Krispy Kreme doughnuts and coffee."

The un-American generation

Why do conservatives think the future belongs to them? Their power behind the throne in Washington, Grover Norquist, recently explained to the Spanish newspaper *El Mundo*:

"We've had four more years pass where the age cohort that is most Democratic and most pro-statist, are those people who turned 21 years of age between 1932 and 1952—Great Depression, New Deal, World War II, Social Security, the draft—all that stuff. That age cohort is now between the ages of seventy and ninety years old. And every year, two million of them die. . . .This is an age cohort that voted for a draft before the war started and allowed the draft to continue for twenty-five years after the war was over. Their idea of the legitimate role of the state is radically different from anything previous generations knew, or subsequent generations."

If you doubt that Norquist would have really said this, I hasten to add that these words are taken from the conservative *Weekly Standard*, which, after *Slate* and *The New Republic* had published translations from *El Mundo* of Norquist's remarks, and distrusting those accounts for obvious reasons, acquired an actual tape of the statement. Norquist went on to describe what others have called the Greatest Generation as "very un-American."

From everything I know about Norquist and conservatives of his ilk, they really do hate the idea of government help for the needy, whose misfortune they attribute to defects of character while their own prosperity has nothing to do with the government subsidies they have been able to wangle, the taxes they have managed to evade, or the silver spoon that was often theirs at birth, but is solely attributable to their own talent and hard work. Most of all, they hate the thought that their sons and daughters might be required to share the burden of defending this country instead of being able to hire the less-fortunate as substitutes. After all, they have, as Dick Cheney puts it, "other priorities."

Bush's brain

Speaking of Norquist reminds me of his best buddy, Karl Rove. Did you see our alumnus Joshua

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Green's article about Rove in the November *Atlantic*? He points out "Rove's signature tactic is to attack an opponent on the very front that seems unassailable." Mark Kennedy, an opponent of Rove's candidate in an Alabama election, had as a family court judge become dedicated to helping abused children. His devotion to the cause was sufficiently impressive that he was made president of the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse. Proud of his record, his campaign broadcast one commercial showing him holding hands with children. "Trying to counter the positives from that ad," a Rove staffer explained to Green, a whispering campaign was launched alleging that Kennedy was a pedophile. Recognize a pattern?

Boudoir boutiques

Women's sex toys are "making their way into sophisticated boutiques," reports Ruth La Ferla in *The New York Times*. One is located at 69th and Madison Avenue, just across the street from Cartier in a very ritzy part of Manhattan. "When our homes and bathrooms have become temples of design and status-seeking, and when people upscale their sheets and their toilets and their toothbrushes, should we be surprised that they upscale their sex toy too?" comments Juliet Schor, an economist and sociologist.

Next, I'm sure we're going to see vibrators by Prada, and dildos by Dior. But if you're impecunious, don't despair. In not too long, there are sure to be cheap knockoffs on street corners everywhere.

A few good men

In West Virginia, only one in four former welfare recipients whose benefits had expired have found jobs, according to a study by West Virginia University reported by the *Charleston Gazette*'s Scott Finn. More than half of those jobs are part-time. The average former welfare family is earning $6,120 a year. National figures show that although the number of people on welfare declined by 149,000 from Dec. 31, 2002, to Dec. 31, 2003, the number in poverty rose by 1.3 million.

There is no question that welfare reform has succeeded in getting people off the rolls, and, unlike in West Virginia, in many places there are jobs available, albeit mostly low-paying ones. But even with jobs, according to Jason DeParle's important new book *American Dream*, too many of the lives of former recipients remain chaotic. DeParle shows how agonizingly difficult life is with worn-out cars breaking down, utilities being cut off, children crying for attention, health care maddeningly difficult to obtain, neighborhoods depressingly bleak, and wages so low that barely scraping by seems like an impossible dream.

The biggest thing missing in the lives of these women is reliable men. DeParle believes that our most important unacknowledged social problem is finding effective ways to both help and challenge inner-city men to overcome the patterns of self-destructive and irresponsible behavior in which society's prejudices and their own attitudes now trap them.

My own kids are at Georgetown Day

More evidence that a lot is left to do if No Child is to be Left Behind comes from Bush's fans at *The Washington Times*, so it should not be subject to the administration's usual disdain for reports from what it regards as the liberal

The Washington Monthly's

Monthly Journalism Award

Donald L. Bartlett and James B. Steele

"Who Left the Door Open?"
Time
Sept. 20, 2004

Bartlett and Steele, perhaps the preeminent team of investigative journalists working today, have produced a stunning, comprehensive account of the federal government's failures to secure our border with Mexico since September 11. The reassignment of Border Patrolmen has meant that the number of immigrants creeping across the Rio Grande has grown each year since 2001. This year, more than 3 million illegals will cross, including roughly 60,000 from places other than Mexico; federal agents have picked up border-crossers who hail from Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq. Bartlett and Steele are particularly devastating in detailing the ways in which the immigrants overwhelm border towns, and the deceitful policy dance Washington plays: "Mexico sends its poor north to take jobs illegally, and the U.S. arrests enough of the border crossers to create the illusion that it is enforcing the immigration laws while allowing the great majority to get through."

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005. Or email us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

media. The *Times* article is based on a study by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute that finds that, in many large cities, a high percentage of public school teachers send their own children to private schools: 44 percent in Philadelphia, 41 in Cincinnati, 39 in Chicago, 35 in Baltimore, 33 in New York, and 28 in Washington, D.C.

The *Times* uses these figures to make the case for vouchers. And I favor vouchers as a short-term solution for poor parents whose children are trapped in terrible school systems. But it seems to me the main point of the figures is to show the need for major reform of public education in these large cities and everywhere else the public schools are in a bad way. To me, the tragedy of George W. Bush's presidency is that he won the 2000 election with No Child Left Behind but proceeded to leave the program behind as he became obsessed with Iraq.

Fannie Mae's Ken Lays

Who benefited from the accounting shenanigans at Fannie Mae? Consider $400 million that should have been charged as expense in 1998. Unfortunately, it would have reduced bonuses due present and former CEOs Franklin Raines and James Johnson, so Fannie Mae's bookkeepers moved $200 million in expenses to another year. Voila! Raines and Johnson collected their bonuses "undiminished," as Gretchen Morgenson of *The New York Times* put it, by proper accounting.

But it's such a boring task

You have probably read about the FBI's failure to translate thousands of hours of wiretap recordings from counterintelligence and counterterrorism investigations. 123,000 of these hours are, according to an audit by the Inspector General of the Department of Justice, Glenn Fine, "in languages primarily related to counter-terrorism activities," including Arabic. What you may not know is that this problem is not something that only became clear after 9/11. In fact, the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993 might have been prevented if the FBI had been doing timely translations of its wiretaps. Evidence of the plotting of that event from as early as 1990 was on wiretaps not translated until after the bombing.

One receipt submitted from a trip to Richmond by D.C. education office employees was for a gas station in North Carolina—a state which, for those who slept through geography class, is definitely not located between Washington and Richmond.

Why not wear a sign?

We've told you how air marshals have to follow a dress code that can make them easily identifiable. Now, from Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar of the *Los Angeles Times*, comes news of another way they are required to identify themselves by their employer, the Department of Homeland Security. When they check in at the hotels they are required to use because the department has negotiated special rates, they must ask for the "air marshal discount." This may not seem a major threat to national security, but if I were an al Qaeda recruiter, I'd make a point of befriending desk clerks.

Kinsey's beatnik

The recent revelations about Alfred Kinsey's sex life have raised some questions about the reliability of the research upon which Kinsey's landmark books were based. I know nothing about Kinsey's sex life, but I do know a bit about his research.

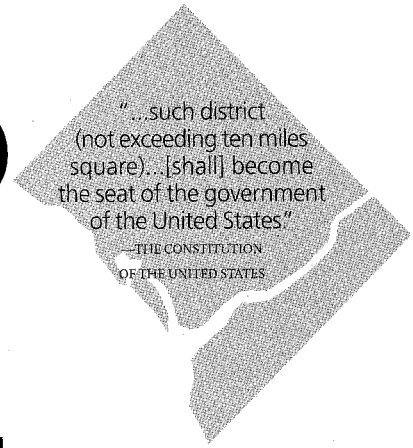
One of my friends during my college days at Columbia was Allen Ginsberg. He introduced me to a friend of his named Herbert Huncke, who had been a source and a recruiter for Kinsey. Herbert was a junkie who supported himself and his habit by petty larceny. Kinsey gave him $10 for the interview and $2 a head for each recruit. I've always thought that the word "beat" was first used by Allen to describe Herbert. He looked defeated—terribly thin, almost ghostly in appearance. He moved with stealth—"like an Arab," Jack Kerouac wrote. I saw him fairly frequently for a couple of years, but usually only when he was trying to sell me something that I was confident he had not acquired by legal means. Although he later developed genuine talent as a writer, and earned a three-column obituary in *The New York Times*, at that time I would not have trusted him around the corner or anywhere else for that matter.

He was the kind of fellow whom I suspect would have told Kinsey anything that would titillate and, even if he was telling the truth, would have described a sex life, that was, to put it as gently as possible, atypical. Herbert called his autobiography *Guilty of Everything*.

Although Kinsey may have found a representative sample elsewhere, he definitely did not find it at the place Herbert did his recruiting. It was the Automat on 42nd Street between 7th and 8th Avenue, which was patronized almost exclusively by minor criminals—thieves, con men, pimps, prostitutes of both sexes—and major league substance abusers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

10 MILES SQUARE



Writers' Block

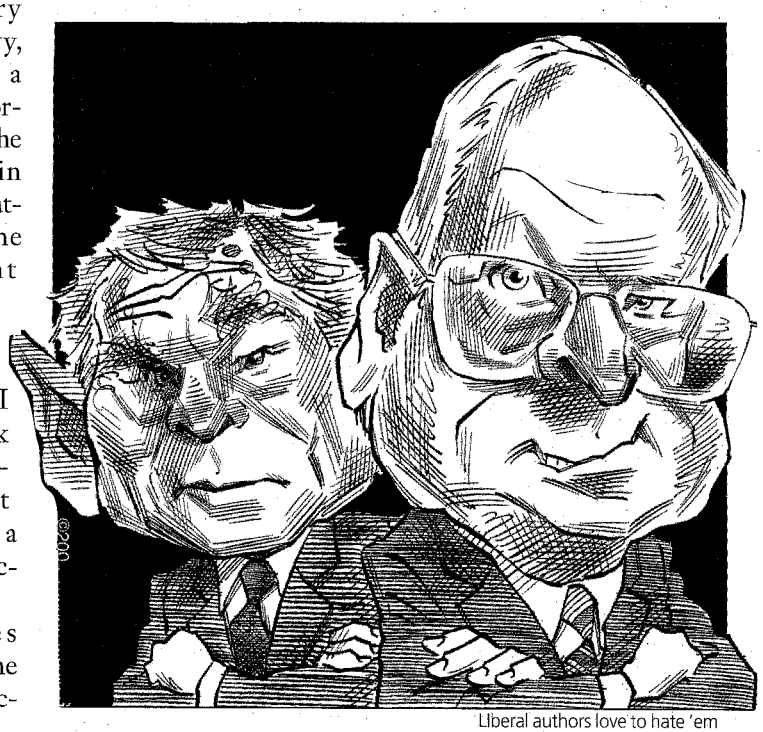
What will Bush-bashing book authors do if Kerry wins?

By Matthew Quirk

Jack Huberman doesn't seem particularly mad as he reads *The New York Times* on his laptop. He doesn't grumble or cringe, or ball his fists. As his tongue snatches a small crumb of toasted English muffin from his top lip, he looks the way any other trim, middle-aged man of average height with retreating gray hair would look while catching up on the news and checking his email on a Sunday afternoon. But Jack is full of hate. It's his job.

"'Surge in Iraqi violence results in overflowing morgues,'" he says, checking the headlines. "That's a good one." When Huberman finds something in the paper that makes him hate George W. Bush, which is often, he copies it into a Microsoft Word document, organized by alphabetical headings (Campaign Finance Reform; Cheney and Halliburton; Chicken hawks), and formats it according to an elaborate system. For every tidbit excerpted, the chief reason to hate Bush is put in bold type, while secondary reasons are underlined. Copied text goes in 11-point font; editorial comments from Huberman in 12-point. Everything else is cut, with deletions indicated by ellipses. Occasionally, Bush elicits so much hate on a given subject that Huberman is forced to make adjustments. At one point this summer, for instance, he noticed the file was getting very front-heavy, owing to a strong performance by the president in the "Iraq" category. "The mid-point was about F," notes Huberman. "So I had to break War Profiteering out from Iraq as a separate section."

So goes work on the potential second volume of *The Bush-Haters Handbook: A Guide to the Most Appalling President of the Past 100 Years*. (The first volume, which came out last December, is currently in its fifth printing.) So far, volume two is 432-pages long. Every entry still needs to be trimmed and condensed into



Liberal authors love to hate 'em

Taylor Jones. 2004, LA Times Syndicate

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what will become short essays detailing different aspects of the 43rd president's loathesomeness. But before any of that can happen, an event must occur which Huberman's many readers almost certainly dread: George W. Bush must win reelection. "It is a conflict," admits Huberman, whose months of research would go to waste should John Kerry win. "But I would gladly sacrifice volume two," Huberman adds hurriedly, "if it meant living through another four years with this crew, it wouldn't be worth it. But if they're back, God forbid, I'm ready."

Huberman isn't the only one. By a conservative count, there are over 150 books on the market dedicated exclusively to the president's faults and failures. He's been attacked at book length as greedy, corrupt, stupid, and fascist; as an alleged rapist, murderer, drug addict, alcoholic, and alien; as a zealot, putschist, dyslexic, liar, traitor, coward, evil genius, and marionette; with psychoanalysis, philosophy, economics; and, counterfactually, as an African American. (*What if George W. Bush Were a Black Man*, by Dr. Boyce D. Watkins). He's been bashed about jobs, the war on terror, the environment, AIDS, reproductive rights, poverty, and the sorry state of contemporary culture in general. Bush's liberal critics have taken advantage of every medium imaginable. They've published in hardcover, paperback, and e-books; in large print editions and books-on-tape; in novels, graphic novels, comics, cartoons, photographs, and verse; in calendars, parenting guides, quizzes and coloring books, box kits, trading cards, handbooks, guidebooks, readers and lists, both alphabetic and ordered by rank.

Anti-Bush authors have singled out the president's five biggest lies about Iraq as well as his top 20 lies across all topics, and they are dedicated to making sure you don't vote for Bush this November. For those already inclined to vote against the incumbent, Bill Press's *Bush Must Go: The Top Ten Reasons Why George Bush Doesn't Deserve a Second Term* will probably suffice; those who need more convincing might pick up *50 Reasons Not to Vote for Bush*, a collection edited by Robert Sterling, or even John Heckenlively's *2004 Reasons America Needs Regime Change*. Collectively, the anti-Bush books sell well enough that they merit their own table at the bookstore. Sometimes more room is needed. When I stopped by the Barnes & Noble in New York's Union Square looking for *The Bush-Hater's Handbook*, the clerk directed me to the fourth floor: "There's a whole wall."

Most publishers trace the election-season glut of books to the summer of 2003, when a crop of liberal books, beginning with Al Franken's *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them*, Lou Dubose and Molly Ivins's *Bushwhacked*, and Joe Conason's *Big Lies*, jumped onto bestseller lists. "Everyone was taken by surprise by the degree of interest and sales with Franken's book and the others," says Rick Kot, an editor at Viking Press. "It's a copy-cat industry, so everyone jumped on the bandwagon." In the year or so since, 25 anti-Bush books have made it onto the bestsellers lists. Even books from small liberal presses have sold hundreds of thousands of copies, and publishers have been inundated with new proposals. "I was getting so many phone calls from agents, all yadda yadda yadda; I was passing on everything," says Carl Bromley, editorial director of Nation Books. Greg Bates, of Common Courage, was still getting calls during the last days of September: "It was ridiculous. I get proposals now asking can you get this out by the election. I feel like putting up a sign or billboard that says: 'No. Forget it. It's too late.'" Even President Bush noted the stimulus his administration has provided to booksellers. "It really gets me when the critics say I haven't done enough for the economy," he joked at the White House Correspondents Dinner this spring. "Look what I've done for the book publishing industry."

A Kerry victory, most publishers agree, would mean instant commercial death for many of the anti-Bush books now on the shelves. But some authors would rather see Bush lose—and their sales numbers drop off—than endure four more years. "My wife has mentioned that if Bush wins, it will be bad from a household finances point of view," says David Corn, author of 2003's *The Lies of George W. Bush*, among the first anti-Bush books published. "But from a mental health perspective, I'd be willing to take the financial hit, and of course it's best for the country." Eric Alterman published *The Book on Bush: How George W. (Mis)Leads America* in February, and it was still selling hundreds of copies a week when he began hounding Viking to print the paperback, hoping to get it out before the election. But

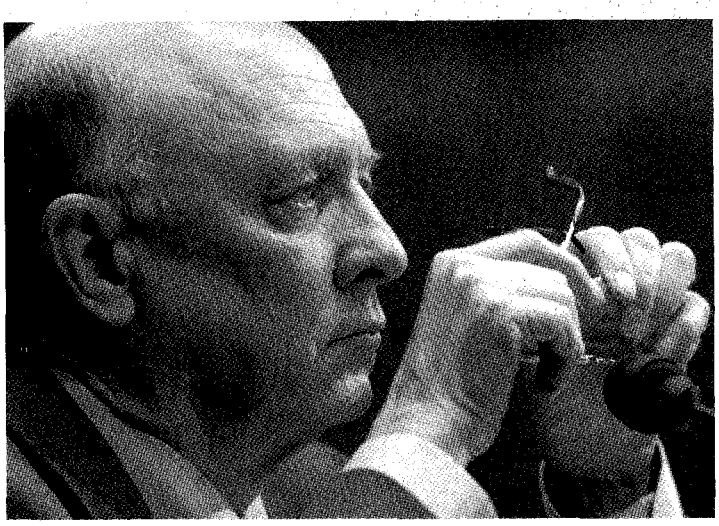
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they weren't sure what to do. If Viking waited, and Bush won, they could do well on the paperback edition without cannibalizing hardcover sales. Alterman kept pushing. "I was sending my publisher a constant stream of emails, making a business argument to get it out at the height of the election season, though in my head it was a psychological argument," he says. "I didn't want a single corpuscle in my body to be divided." (Viking eventually agreed, and the soft cover edition of *The Book on Bush* is now out.) "I'm betting the farm."

But for less-established authors with books only recently published or, worse, still in progress, the political concern that Bush will win must be balanced against the professional concern that he won't. David Lindorff, a former Asian correspondent for *BusinessWeek*, had trouble getting publishers interested when he first pitched his idea for an anti-Bush book. *This Can't Be Happening! Resisting the Disintegration of American Democracy* only hit the shelves in September, leaving him with a month or two of sales. A Bush victory—which he expects—would give the book a longer life, "the silver lining to a dismal election night," says Lindorff. Chris Mooney, a correspondent for the *American Prospect* and a frequent contributor to this magazine, pitched a book about Bush's war on science last October but was told there was no way it could be done before the election. Mooney went back to election-proof the concept. "Now it's the history of conservative war on science," he says. The broader theme is safe no matter who wins in November, but a Bush win would still help.

"I joke about whether I should vote for him," Mooney says, then pauses. "I don't think I really will."

Matthew Quirk is a reporter-researcher at the *Atlantic Monthly*.



James Woolsey in 2004; Getty Images

Clear and Present Danger

The hawks relaunch a Cold-War relic.

By Jaideep Singh

James Woolsey, the former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, is leaning over a speakerphone at the front of a small, ornate ballroom in Washington's Mayflower Hotel. "Hi George. It's Jim Woolsey." On the other end is George P. Schultz, former secretary of state under Ronald Reagan. Woolsey leans into the phone, speaking loudly and slowly, as people do when they're speaking to foreign tourists. "We've just gotten underway here at the Mayflower here in Washington," he tells Schultz, in a crowd of some four dozen think tank scholars, graduate students, interns, and journalists. "I've just announced that you've kindly agreed to serve as co-chairman of the Committee on the Present Danger ...I thought I'd see if you'd like to share any thoughts that you might have."

The disembodied voice of Schultz pipes in from California, where it's around 6 in the morning. "I welcome the reemergence of the CPD," says Schultz, sounding half-asleep. "In the early days, what the people [on the Committee] thought and said made a big difference." There is scattered applause.

It is a somewhat awkward beginning for "World War IV," as organizers have dubbed the first public gathering of the re-reformed CPD. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

first Committee on the Present Danger was formed in 1950 by Cold War liberals who favored a policy of containment vis-à-vis the Soviet Union; the second installment came after Vietnam, launched by hawkish Democrats who felt their party had gone soft on the Reds, and who during the Reagan years had become active in Republican foreign-policy circles. Today, the latter group are known as neoconservatives. And like a graying '60s rock band reuniting for one last tour, they've decided that the old hits still have some life in them.

The committee relaunched (again) last summer, heralding its return with full-page advertisements in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, a 30,000 word essay by Norman Podhoretz in the neocon flagship journal *Commentary*, and a public statement of purpose signed by more than 40 mostly right-leaning foreign-policy luminaries, among them some of the leading proponents of the Iraq war. Their mission? To "educate free people everywhere about the threat posed by global radical Islamist and fascist terrorist movements; to counsel against appeasement of terrorists; and build support for a strategy of victory against this menace to freedom."

But even as the new present danger neatly replaces the old one, it's obvious there have been some changes in the lineup. The committee's latest incarnation includes both old-school Soviet hawks—think Podhoretz, Eliot Cohen, and Jeane Kirkpatrick—and younger activists and scholars who cut their teeth during the Iraq debates of the 1990s, including Danielle Pletka, head of the American Enterprise Institute's defense studies program, and Laurie Mylroie, the AEI fellow and foreign-policy pundit who's spent years arguing that Saddam Hussein was behind the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. But some of the usual suspects have yet to sign on, including William Kristol of the *Weekly Standard*; Gary Schmitt, head of the Project for the New American Century; and Richard Perle, who, though he hasn't signed the committee's statement of purpose, nevertheless shows up at the Mayflower halfway through the proceedings and is quickly surrounded by hovering well-wishers.

For that matter, it's not clear why Schultz is involved—he's a classic foreign-policy realist, against whom some of the original neoconservatives, such as Kirkpatrick, once battled for influence and prestige in the Reagan administration. But he does his best to fit in. "As you may remember, I was a hawk on terrorism," Schultz explains unconvincingly over the speakerphone. "And I didn't get much of a hearing."

The former secretary of state is followed by a verbose and still-vigorous Podhoretz, who comes to the podium to wonder out loud why everyone is so riled up and surprised about the casualties and the cost of the "battle" of Iraq, of which most of the committee's members have been inveterate supporters. It "drives me nuts," he tells the audience, when he hears people complaining about the financial burden of the war or the steady drip of casualties. Compared to previous wars, he argues, the costs are minimal. The doubters, he intones, "fail to understand what a war is like." It's an odd choice of words given that one of Podhoretz's own CPD colleagues, Kenneth Adelman, famously predicted in a March 2002 *Washington Post* op-ed that "liberating Iraq would be a cakewalk." But Podhoretz is undeterred. The Iraq war, he declares, has gone "triumphantly." The crowd applauds vigorously at this.

Later in the day—perhaps for those wondering if the Iraqis themselves agree with Podhoretz's assessment—the conference organizers screen a trailer for *Voices in Iraq*, a forthcoming feature-length documentary for which two movie producers had handed out digital video cameras to ordinary Iraqis and asked them to film their daily lives. Evidently, the Iraqis in question see things the way CPD does. Men on the streets of Baghdad discuss how nice it is to have Saddam gone and to be better paid now. One child asks his mother what she thinks of democracy. "Hassan," she replies to her son, "democracy means having individual freedom." A torture victim of Saddam says he wouldn't mind being tortured at Abu Ghraib. "You have a nice American woman undress you and play with your penis," he smirks. The audience laughs.

Jaideep Singh is editorial assistant at *Foreign Policy*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bernard Lewis Revisited

What if Islam isn't an obstacle to democracy in the Middle East, but the secret to achieving it?

By Michael Hirsh

America's misreading of the Arab world—and our current misadventure in Iraq—may have really begun in 1950. That was the year a young University of London historian named Bernard Lewis visited Turkey for the first time. Lewis, who is today an imposing, white-haired sage known as the "doyen of Middle Eastern studies" in America (as a *New York Times* reviewer once called him), was then on a sabbatical. Granted access to the Imperial Ottoman archives—the first Westerner allowed in—Lewis recalled that he felt "rather like a child turned loose in a toy shop, or like an intruder in Ali Baba's cave." But what Lewis saw happening outside his study window was just as exciting, he later wrote. There in Istanbul, in the heart of what once was a Muslim empire, a Western-style democracy was being born.

The hero of this grand transformation was Kemal Ataturk. A generation before Lewis's visit to Turkey, Ataturk (the last name, which he adopted, means "father of all Turks"), had seized control of the dying Ottoman Sultanate. Intent on single-handedly shoving his country into the modern West—"For the people, despite the people," he memorably declared—Ataturk imposed a puritanical secularism that abolished the caliphate, shuttered religious schools, and banned fezes, veils, and other icons of Islamic culture, even purging Turkish of its Arabic vocabulary. His People's Party had ruled autocratically since 1923. But in May 1950, after the passage of a new electoral law, it resoundingly lost the national elections to the nascent Democrat Party. The constitutional handover was an event "without precedent in the history of the country and the region," as Lewis wrote in *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, published in 1961, a year after the Turkish army first seized power. And it was Kemal Ataturk, Lewis noted at another point, who had "taken the first decisive steps in the acceptance of Western civilization."

Today, that epiphany—Lewis's Kemalist vision of a secularized, Westernized Arab democracy that casts off the medieval shackles of Islam and enters modernity at last—remains the core of George W. Bush's faltering vision in Iraq. As his other rationales for war fall away, Bush has only democratic transformation to point to as a *casus belli* in order to justify one of the costliest foreign adventures in American history. And even now Bush, having handed over *faux* sovereignty to the Iraqis and while beating a pell-mell retreat under fire, does not want to settle for some watered-down or Islamicized version of democracy. His administration's official goal is still dictated by the "Lewis Doctrine," as *The Wall Street Journal* called it: a Westernized polity, reconstituted and imposed from above like Kemal's Turkey, that is to become a bulwark of security for America and a model for the region.

Iraq, of course, does not seem to be heading in that direction. Quite the contrary: Iraq is passing from a sec-

Michael Hirsh is a senior editor at *Newsweek*, based in Washington, and author of *At War with Ourselves: Why America is Squandering its Chance to Build a Better World* (Oxford University Press).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ular to an increasingly radicalized and Islamicized society, and should it actually turn into a functioning polity, it is one for the present defined more by bullets than by ballots. All of which raises some important questions. What if the mistakes made in Iraq were not merely tactical missteps but stem from a fundamental misreading of the Arab mindset? What if, in other words, the doyen of Middle Eastern studies got it all wrong?

A growing number of Middle Eastern scholars who in the past have quietly stewed over Lewis's outsized influence say this is exactly what happened. To them, it is no surprise that Lewis and his acolytes in Washington botched the war on terror. In a new book, provocatively titled *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*, one of those critics, Columbia scholar Richard Bulliet, argues that Lewis has been getting his "master narrative" about the Islamic world wrong since his early epiphanic days in Turkey—and he's still getting it wrong today.

In Cheney's bunker

Lewis's basic premise, put forward in a series of articles, talks, and bestselling books, is that the West—what used to be known as Christendom—is now in the last stages of a centuries-old struggle for dominance and prestige with Islamic civilization. (Lewis coined the term "clash of civilizations," using it in a 1990 essay titled "The Roots of Muslim Rage," and Samuel Huntington admits he picked it up from him.) Osama Bin Laden, Lewis thought, must be viewed in this millennial construct as the last gasp of a losing cause, brazenly mocking the cowardice of the "Crusaders." Bin Laden's view of America as a "paper tiger" reflects a lack of respect for American power throughout the Arab world. And if we Americans, who trace our civilizational lineage back to the Crusaders, flagged now, we would only invite future attacks. Bin Laden was, in this view, less an aberrant extremist than a mainstream expression of Muslim frustration, welling up from the anti-Western nature of Islam. "I have no doubt that September 11 was the opening salvo of the final battle," Lewis told me in an interview last spring. Hence the only real answer to 9/11 was a decisive show of American strength in the Arab world; the only way forward, a Kemalist conquest of hearts and minds. And the most obvious place to seize the offensive and end the age-old struggle was in the heart of the Arab world, in Iraq.

This way of thinking had the remarkable virtue of appealing powerfully to both the hard-power enthusiasts in the administration, principally Bush and Donald Rumsfeld, who came into office thinking that the soft Clinton years had made America an easy target and who yearned to send a post-9/11 message of strength; and to neoconservatives from the first Bush administration such as Paul Wolfowitz, who were looking for excuses to complete their unfinished business with Saddam from 1991 and saw 9/11 as the ultimate refutation of the "realist" response to the first Gulf War. Leaving Saddam in power in '91, betraying the Shiites, and handing Kuwait back to its corrupt rulers had been classic realism: Stability was all. But it turned out that the Arab world wasn't stable, it was seething. No longer could the Arabs be an exception to the rule of post-Cold War democratic transformation, merely a global gas station. The Arabs had to change too, fundamentally, just as Lewis (and Ataturk) had said. But change had to be shoved down their throats—Arab tribal culture understood only force and was too resistant to change, Lewis thought—and it had to happen quickly. This, in turn, required leaving behind Islam's anti-modern obsessions.

Iraq and its poster villain, Saddam Hussein, offered a unique opportunity for achieving this transformation in one bold stroke (remember "shock and awe"?) while regaining the offensive against the terrorists. So, it was no surprise that in the critical months of 2002 and 2003, while the Bush administration shunned deep thinking and banned State Department Arabists from its councils of power, Bernard Lewis was *persona grata*, delivering spine-stiffening lectures to Cheney over dinner in undisclosed locations. Abandoning his former scholarly caution, Lewis was among the earliest prominent voices after September 11 to press for a confrontation with Saddam, doing so in a series of op-ed pieces in *The Wall Street Journal* with titles like "A War of Resolve" and "Time for Toppling." An official who sat in on some of the Lewis-Cheney discussions recalled, "His view was: 'Get on with it. Don't dither.'" Animated by such grandiose concepts, and like Lewis quite certain they were right, the strategists of the Bush administration in the end thought it unnecessary to prove there were operational links between Saddam and al Qaeda. These were good "bureaucratic" reasons for selling the war to the public, to use Wolfowitz's words, but the real links were deeper: America was taking on a sick civilization, one that it had to beat into submission. Bin Laden's supposedly broad Muslim base, and Saddam's recalcitrance to the West, were part of the same pathology.

The administration's vision of postwar Iraq was also fundamentally Lewisian, which is to say Kemalist. Paul Wolfowitz repeatedly invoked secular, democratic Turkey as a "useful model for others in the Muslim world," as the deputy secretary of defense termed it in December 2002 on the eve of a trip to lay the groundwork for what he thought would be a friendly Turkey's role as a staging ground for the Iraq war. Another key Pentagon neocon and old friend of Lewis's, Harold Rhode, told associates a year ago that "we need an accelerated Turkish model" for Iraq, according to a source who talked with him. (Lewis dedicated a 2003 book, *The Crisis of Islam*, to Rhode whom "I got to know when he was studying Ottoman registers," Lewis told me.) And such men thought that Ahmad Chal-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

abi—also a protégé of Lewis's—might make a fine latter-day Ataturk—strong, secular, pro-Western, and friendly towards Israel. L. Paul Bremer III, the former U.S. civil administrator in Iraq, was not himself a Chalabite, but he too embraced a top-down Kemalist approach to Iraq's resurrection. The role of the Islamic community, meanwhile, was consistently marginalized in the administration's planning. U.S. officials saw Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most prestigious figure in the country, as a clueless medieval relic. Even though military intelligence officers were acutely aware of Sistani's importance—having gathered information on him for more than a year before the invasion—Bremer and his Pentagon overseers initially sidelined the cleric, defying his calls for early elections.

Bernard Lewis's inspiration, Kemal Ataturk (circa 1930).

Looking for love in all the wrong places

Lewis has long had detractors in the scholarly world, although his most ardent enemies have tended to be literary mavericks like the late Edward Said, the author of *Orientalism*, a long screed against the cavalier treatment of Islam in Western literature. And especially after 9/11, Bulliet and other mainstream Arabists who had urged a softer, more nuanced view of Islam found themselves harassed into silence. Lewisites such as Martin Kramer, author of *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America* (a fierce post-9/11 attack on Bulliet) and other prominent scholars such as Robert Wood of the University of Chicago, suggested that most academic Arabists were apologists for Islamic radicalism.

But now, emboldened by the Bush administration's self-made quagmire in Iraq, the Arabists are launching a counterattack. They charge that Lewis's whole analysis missed the mark, beginning with his overarching construct, the great struggle between Islam and Christendom. These scholars argue that Lewis has slept through most of modern Arab history. Entangled in medieval texts, Lewis's view ignores too much and confusingly conflates old Ottoman with modern Arab history. "He projects from the Ottoman experience onto the Middle East. But after the Ottoman Empire was disbanded, a link was severed with the rest of Arab world," says Nader Hashemi, a University of Toronto scholar who is working on another anti-Lewis book. In other words, Istanbul and the caliphate were no longer the center of things. Turkey under Ataturk went in one direction, the Arabs, who were colonized, in another. Lewis, says Hashemi, "tries to interpret the problem of political development by trying to project a line back to medieval and early Islamic history. In the process, he totally ignores the impact of the British and French colonialists, and the repressive rule of many post-colonial leaders. He misses the break" with the past.

At least until the Iraq war, most present-day Arabs didn't think in the stark clash-of-civilization terms Lewis prefers. Bin Laden likes to vilify Western Crusaders, but until relatively recently, he was still seen by much of the Arab establishment as a marginal figure. To most Arabs before 9/11, the Crusades were history as ancient as they are to us in the West. Modern Arab anger and frustration is, in fact, less than a hundred years old. As bin Laden knows very well, this anger is a function not of Islam's humiliation at the Treaty of Carlowitz of 1699—the sort of long-ago defeat that Lewis highlights in his bestselling *What Went Wrong*—but of much more recent developments. These include the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement by which the British and French agreed to divvy up the Arabic-speaking countries after World War I; the subsequent creation, by the Europeans, of corrupt, kleptocratic tyrannies in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan; the endemic poverty and underdevelopment that resulted for most of the 20th century; the U.N.-imposed creation of Israel in 1948; and finally, in recent decades, American support for the bleak status quo.

Yet as Bulliet writes, over the longer reach of history, Islam and the West have been far more culturally integrated than most people realized; there is a far better case for "Islamo-Christian civilization" than there is for the clash of civilizations. "There are two narratives here," says Fawaz Gerges, an intellectual ally of Bulliet's at Sarah Lawrence University. "One is Bernard Lewis. But

Hulton Archive Images

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the other narrative is that in historical terms, there have been so many inter-alliances between world of Islam and the West. There has never been a Muslim umma, or community, except for 23 years during the time of Mohammed. Except in the theoretical minds of the jihadists, the Muslim world was always split. Many Muslim leaders even allied themselves with the Crusaders."

Today, progress in the Arab world will not come by secularizing it from above (Bulliet's chapter dealing with Chalabi is called "Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places") but by rediscovering this more tolerant Islam, which actually predates radicalism and, *contra* Ataturk, is an ineluctable part of Arab self-identity that must be accommodated. For centuries, Bulliet argues, comparative stability prevailed in the Islamic world not (as Lewis maintains) because of the Ottomans' success, but because Islam was playing its traditional role of constraining tyranny. "The collectivity of religious scholars acted at least theoretically as a countervailing force against tyranny. You had the implicit notion that if Islam is pushed out of the public sphere, tyranny will increase, and if that happens, people will look to Islam to redress the tyranny." This began to play out during the period that Lewis hails as the modernization era of the 19th century, when Western legal structures and armies were created. "What Lewis never talks about is the concomitant removal of Islam from the center of public life, the devalidation of Islamic education and Islamic law, the marginalization of Islamic scholars," Bulliet told me. Instead of modernization, what ensued was what Muslim clerics had long feared, tyranny that conforms precisely with some theories of Islamic political development, notes Bulliet. What the Arab world should have seen was "not an increase in modernization so much as an increase in tyranny. By the 1960s, that prophecy was fulfilled. You had dictatorships in most of the Islamic world." Egypt's Gamel Nasser, Syria's Hafez Assad, and others came in the guise of Arab nationalists, but they were nothing more than tyrants.

Yet there was no longer a legitimate force to oppose this trend. In the place of traditional Islamic learning—which had once allowed, even encouraged, science and advancement—there was nothing. The old religious authorities had been hounded out of public life, back into the mosque. The Caliphate was dead; when Ataturk destroyed it in Turkey, he also removed it from the rest of the Islamic world. Into that vacuum roared a fundamentalist reaction led by brilliant but aberrant amateurs like Egypt's Sayyid Qutb, the founding philosopher of Ayman Zawahiri's brand of Islamic radicalism who was hanged by al-Nasser, and later, Osama bin Laden, who grew up infected by the Saudis' extreme version of Wahhabism. Even the creator of Wahhabism, the 18th-century thinker Mohammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, was outside the mainstream, notorious for vandalizing shrines and "denounced" by theologians across the Islamic world in his time for his "doctrinal mediocrity and illegitimacy," as the scholar Abdelwahab Meddeb writes in another new book that rebuts Lewis, *Islam and its Discontents*.

Wahhabism's fast growth in the late 20th century was also a purely modern phenomenon, a function of Saudi petrodollars underwriting Wahhabist mosques and clerics throughout the Arab world (and elsewhere, including America). Indeed, the elites in Egypt and other Arab countries still tend to mock the Saudis as *déclassés* Bedouins who would have stayed that way if it were not for oil. "It's as if Jimmy Swaggert had come into hundreds of billions of dollars and taken over the church," one Arab official told me. The hellish culmination of this modern trend occurred in the mountains of Afghanistan in the 1980s and '90s, when extremist Wahhabism, in the person of bin Laden, was married to Qutb's Egyptian Islamism, in the person of Zawahiri, who became bin Laden's deputy.

Critics were right to see the bin Laden phenomenon as a reaction against corrupt tyrannies like Egypt's and Saudi Arabia's, and ultimately against American support for those regimes. They were wrong to conclude that it was a mainstream phenomenon welling up from the anti-modern character of Islam, or that the only immediate solution lay in Western-style democracy. It was, instead, a reaction that came out of an Islam misshapen by modern political developments, many of them emanating from Western influences, outright invasion by British, French, and Italian colonialists, and finally the U.S.-Soviet clash that helped create the mujahadeen jihad in Afghanistan.

Academic probation

Today, even as the administration's case for invading Iraq has all but collapsed, Bernard Lewis's public image has remained largely intact. While his neocon protégés fight for their reputations and their jobs, Lewis's latest book, a collection of essays called *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East*, received mostly respectful reviews last spring and summer. Yet events on the ground seem to be bearing out some of the academic criticisms of Lewis made by Bulliet and others. Indeed, they suggest that what is happening is the opposite of what Lewis predicted.

The administration's invasion of Iraq seems to have given bin Laden a historic gift. It has vindicated his rhetoric describing the Americans as latter-day Crusaders and Mongols, thus luring more adherents and inviting more rage and terror acts. (The administration admitted as much last summer, when it acknowledged that its "Patterns of Global Terrorism" report had been 180 degrees wrong. The report, which came out last June, at first said terrorist attacks around the world were down in 2003, indicating the war on terror was being won. Following complaints from experts, the State

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Department later revised the report to show that attacks were at their highest level since 1982.)

The new Iraq is also looking less and less Western, and certainly less secular than it was under Saddam. In the streets of Baghdad—once one of the most secular Arab capitals, women now go veiled and alcohol salesmen are beaten. The nation's most popular figures are Sistani and his radical Shiite rival, the young firebrand Moktada al-Sadr, who was permitted to escape besieged Najaf with his militia intact and is now seen as a champion of the Iraqi underclass. According to a survey commissioned by the Coalition Provisional Authority in late May, a substantial majority of Iraqis, 59 percent, want their religious communities to have "a great deal" of influence in selecting members of the new election commission. That's far more than those who favored tribal leaders (38 percent), political figures (31 percent), or the United Nations (36 percent). The poll also showed that Iraq's most popular political figures are religious party-affiliated leaders such as Ibrahaim Jaferi and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim. To a fascinating degree, Islam now seems to be filling precisely the role Bulliet says it used to play, as a constraint against tyranny—whether the tyrant is now seen as the autocratic Americans or our man in Baghdad, interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

Bremer once promised to ban Islamic strictures on family law and women's rights, and the interim constitution that he pushed through the Governing Council in March affirms that Islam is only one of the foundations of the state. But Sistani has dismissed the constitution as a transition democracy, and Iraq's political future is now largely out of American hands (though the U.S. military may continue to play a stabilizing role in order to squelch any move toward civil war). "I think the best-case scenario for Iraq is that they hold these parliamentary elections, and you get some kind of representative government dominated by religious parties," says University of Michigan scholar Juan Cole. Even Fouad Ajami, one of Lewis's longtime intellectual allies and like him an avowed Kemalist, concluded last spring in a *New York Times* op-ed piece: "Let's face it: Iraq is not going to be America's showcase in the Arab-Muslim world … We expected a fairly secular society in Iraq (I myself wrote in that vein at the time). Yet it turned out that the radical faith—among the Sunnis as well as the Shiites—rose to fill the void left by the collapse of the old despotism."

Turkey hunt

Today, the anti-Lewisites argue, the only hope is that a better, more benign form of Islam fights its way back in the hands of respected clerics like Sistani, overcoming the aberrant strains of the Osama bin Ladens and the Abu Mousab al-Zarqawis. Whatever emerges in Iraq and the Arab world will be, for a long time to come, Islamic. And it will remain, for a long time, anti-American, beginning with the likelihood that any new Iraqi government is going to give the boot to U.S. troops as soon as it possibly can. (That same CPA poll showed that 92 percent of Iraqis see the Americans as occupiers, not liberators, and 86 percent now want U.S. soldiers out, either "immediately" or after the 2005 election.) America may simply have to endure an unpleasant Islamist middle stage—and Arabs may have to experience its failure, as the Iranians have—before modernity finally overtakes Iraq and the Arab world. "Railing against Islam as a barrier to democracy and modern progress cannot make it go away so long as tyranny is a fact of life for most Muslims," Bulliet writes. "Finding ways of wedding [Islam's traditional] protective role with modern democratic and economic institutions is a challenge that has not yet been met."

No one, even Bush's Democratic critics, seems to fully comprehend this. Sens. Joseph Biden (D-Del.) and Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) have introduced legislation that would create secular alternatives to madrassas, without realizing that this won't fly in the Arab world: All one can hope for are more moderate madrassas, because Islam is still seen broadly as a legitimating force. "What happens if the road to what could broadly be called democracy lies through Islamic revolution?" says Wood of the University of Chicago. The best hope, some of these scholars say, is that after a generation or so, the "Islamic" tag in Arab religious parties becomes rather anodyne, reminiscent of what happened to Christian democratic parties in Europe.

This may already be happening slowly in Turkey, where the parliament is dominated by the majority Islamic Justice and Development Party. The JDP leader, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan—who was once banned from public service after reciting a poem that said "the mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets, and the faithful our soldiers"—has shown an impressive degree of pragmatism in governing. But again, Turkey is a unique case, made so by Kemal and his secular, military-enforced coup back in the '20s. If Erdogan still secretly wants to re-Islamicize Turkey, he can only go so far in an environment in which the nation's powerful military twitches at every sign of incipient religiosity. Erdogan is also under unique pressure to secularize as Turkey bids to enter the European Union, which is not a card that moderate Arab secularists can hold up to win over their own populations.

Resolving the tension between Islam and politics will require a long, long process of change. As Bulliet writes, Christendom struggled for hundreds of years to come to terms with the role of religion in civil society. Even in America, separation of church and state "was not originally a cornerstone of the U.S. Constitution," and Americans are still fighting among themselves over the issue today.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In our talk last spring, Lewis was still arguing that Iraq would follow the secular path he had laid out for it. He voiced the line that has become a favorite of Wolfowitz's, that the neocons are the most forthright champions of Arab progress, and that the Arabists of the State Department who identified with the idea of "Arab exceptionalism" are merely exhibitng veiled racism. This is the straight neocon party line, of course: If you deny that secular democracy is the destiny of every people, you are guilty of cultural snobbery. But somehow Lewis's disdain for Islam, with its hagiographic invocation of Ataturk, managed to creep into our conversation. Threaded throughout Lewis's thinking, despite his protests to the contrary, is a Kemalist conviction that Islam is fundamentally anti-modern. In his 1996 book *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years*, for example, Lewis stresses the Koran's profession of the "finality and perfection of the Muslim revelation." Even though Islamic authorities have created laws and regulations beyond the strict word of the Koran in order to deal with the needs of the moment, "the making of new law, though common and widespread, was always disguised, almost furtive, and there was therefore no room for legislative councils or assemblies such as formed the starting-point of European democracy," he writes. In other words, Islam is an obstacle. "The Islamic world is now at beginning of 15th century," Lewis told me. "The Western world is at the beginning of the 21st century." He quickly added: "That doesn't mean [the West] is more advanced, it means it's gone through more." Following that timeline, Lewis suggested that the Islamic world is today "on the verge of its Reformation"—a necessary divorce between religion and politics that Lewis believes has been too long in coming. This view has become conventional wisdom in Washington, resonating not only with the neocons but also with the modernization theorists who have long dominated American campuses. Yet behind this view, say scholars like Bulliet, lies a fundamental rejection of Arabs' historical identity. The reason for that, Bulliet believes, resides in the inordinate influence that Lewis's historical studies of the Ottomans retain over his thinking—and by his 1950 visit to Turkey. Bulliet notes that as late as 2002, in the preface to the third edition of *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Lewis "talked about the incredible sense of exhilaration it felt for someone of his generation, shaped by the great war against fascism and the emerging Cold War, to see the face of the modern Middle East emerge in Turkey." As a model, Bulliet argues, Turkey "was as vivid a vision for him 50 years later as it was at the time."

But again, Turkey's experience after the Ottoman empire's dissolution was no longer especially relevant to what was happening in the Arab world. Ataturk, in fact, was not only not an Arab, but his approach to modernity was also most deeply influenced by the fascism of the period (Mussolini was still a much-admired model in the 1920s). And Lewis never developed a feel for what modern Arabs were thinking, especially after he began to adopt strong pro-Israel views in the 1970s. "This is a person who does not like the people he is purporting to have expertise about," says Bulliet. "He doesn't respect them, he considers them to be good and worthy only to the degree they follow a Western path."

The neoconservative transformationalists of the Bush administration, though informed by far less scholarship than Lewis, seemed to adopt his dismissive attitude toward the peculiar demands of Arab and Islamic culture. And now they are paying for it. The downward spiral of the U.S. occupation into bloodshed and incompetence wasn't just a matter of too few troops or other breakdowns in planning, though those were clearly part of it. In fact, the great American transformation machine never really understood much about Arab culture, and it didn't bother to try. The occupation authorities, taking a paternalistic top-down approach, certainly did not comprehend the role of Islam, which is one reason why Bremer and Co. were so late in recognizing the power of the Sistani phenomenon. The occupation also failed because of its inability to comprehend and make use of tribal complexities, to understand "how to get the garbage collected, and know who's married to who," as Wood says. Before the war, Pentagon officials, seeking to justify their low-cost approach to nation-building, liked to talk about how much more sophisticated and educated the Iraqis were than Afghans, how they would quickly resurrect their country. Those officials obviously didn't mean what they said or act on it. In the end, they couldn't bring themselves to trust the Iraqis, and the soldiers at their command rounded up thousands of "hajis" indiscriminately, treating one and all as potential Saddam henchmen or terrorists (as I witnessed myself when, on assignment for *Newsweek*, I joined U.S. troops on raids in the Sunni Triangle last January).

There remains a deeper issue: Did Lewis's misconceptions lead the Bush administration to make a terrible strategic error? Despite the horrors of 9/11, did they transform the bin Laden threat into something grander than it really was? If the "show of strength" in Iraq was wrong-headed, as the Lewis critics say, then Americans must contemplate the terrible idea that they squandered hundreds of billions of dollars and thousands of lives and limbs on the wrong war. If Bernard Lewis's view of the Arab problem was in error, then America missed a chance to round up and destroy a threat—al Qaeda—that in reality existed only on the sick margins of the Islamic world.

It is too soon to throw all of Lewis's Kemalist ideas on the ash-heap of history. Even his academic rivals concede that much of his early scholarship is impressive; some like Michigan's Cole suggest that Lewis lost his way only in his later years when he got pulled into present-day politics, especially the Israeli-Palestinian issue, and began grafting his medieval insights onto the modern Arab mindset. And whether the ultimate cause is mod-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ern or not, the Arab world is a dysfunctional society, one that requires fundamental reform. "The Arab Development Report" issued in the spring of 2002 by the U.N. Development Program, harshly laid out the failings of Arab societies. Calling them "rich, but not developed," the report detailed the deficits of democracy and women's rights that have been favorite targets of the American neoconservatives. The report noted that the Arab world suffers from a lower rate of Internet connectivity than even sub-Saharan Africa, and that education is so backward and isolated that the entire Arab world translates only one-fifth of the books that Greece does. Some scholars also agree that in the longest of long runs, the ultimate vision of Lewis—and the neocons—will prove to be right. Perhaps in the long run, you can't Islamicize democracy, and so Islam is simply standing in the way.

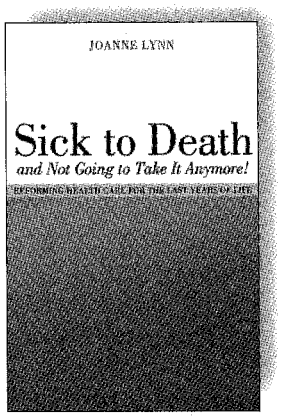
Iran is the best real-world test of this hypothesis right now. A quarter century after the Khomeini revolution, Iran seems to be stuck in some indeterminate middle state. The forces of bottom-up secular democratic reform and top-down mullah control may be stalemated simply because there is no common ground whatsoever between their contending visions. That's one reason the Kemalist approach had its merits, Fouad Ajami argued in a recent appearance at the Council on Foreign Relations. "I think Ataturk understood that if you fall through Islam, you fall through a trap door. And in fact, I think the journey out of Islam that Ataturk did was brilliant. And to the extent that the Muslim world now has forgotten this. . .they will pay dearly for it."

But there is no Ataturk in Iraq (though of course Chalabi, and perhaps Allawi, would still love to play that role). For now, Sistani remains the most prestigious figure in the country, the only true kingmaker. Suspicions remain in the Bush administration that Sistani's long-term goal is to get the Americans out and the Koran in—in other words, to create another mullah state as in Iran. But those who know Sistani well say he is much smarter than that. Born in Iran—he moved to Iraq in the early 1950s, around the time Lewis saw the light—Sistani has experienced up close the failures of the Shiite mullah state next door. He and the other Shiites have also suffered the pointy end of Sunni Arab nationalism, having been oppressed under Saddam for decades, and they will never sanction a return to that. So Sistani knows the last, best alternative may be some kind of hybrid, a moderately religious, Shiite-dominated democracy, brokered and blessed by him and conceived with a nuanced federalism that will give the Kurds, Sunnis and others their due. But also a regime that, somewhat like the Iranian mullahs, uses its distinctive Islamic character, and concomitant anti-Americanism and anti-Westernism, as ideological glue. For the Americans who went hopefully to war in Iraq, that option is pretty much all that's left on the table—something even Bernard Lewis may someday have to acknowledge. ◆

"Lynn is a national treasure.

...the most articulate, courageous, and scientifically-grounded voice in our nation for the improvement of health care for people approaching the end of life....her work provides motivation and sound guidance for building the care system we need."

—Donald M. Berwick, M.D., M.P.P., President and CEO, The Institute for Healthcare Improvement

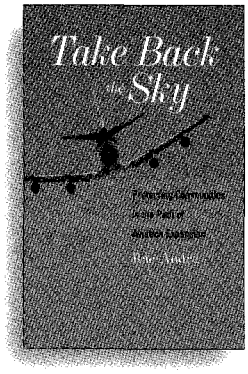


Sick To Death and Not Going to Take It Anymore!
Reforming Health Care for the Last Years of Life
by Joanne Lynn
California/Milbank Books on Health and the Public
$24.95 AT BOOKSTORES OR ORDER
(800) 822-6657 • WWW.UCPRESS.EDU

University of California Press

"André is one of the first to address this issue, and she does it well."

—Michael S. Dukakis, Vice Chairman of the Board, Amtrak; former governor of Massachusetts



TAKE BACK THE SKY
Protecting Communities in the Path of Aviation Expansion
Rae André

"André's blueprint for more livable communities and more sustainable transportation alternatives is a must-read." —Les Blomber, Executive Director, Noise Pollution Clearinghouse

$19.95 at bookstores or order (800) 822-6657
sierraclubbooks.ucpress.edu

Sierra Club Books
Distributed by University of California Press

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Road to Abu Ghraib

The biggest scandal of the Bush administration began at the top.

By Phillip Carter

A generation from now, historians may look back to April 28, 2004, as the day the United States lost the war in Iraq. On that date, "CBS News" broadcast the first ugly photographs of abuses by American soldiers at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison. There were images of a man standing hooded on a box with wires attached to his hands; of guards leering as they forced naked men to simulate sexual acts; of a man led around on a leash by a female soldier; of a dead Iraqi detainee, packed in ice; and more. The pictures had been taken the previous fall by U.S. Army military police soldiers assigned to the prison, but had made it into the hands of Army criminal investigators only months later, when a soldier named Joseph Darby anonymously passed them a CD-ROM full of prison photos. The images aroused worldwide indignation, and illustrated in graphic detail both the lengths to which the United States would go to get intelligence, and the extent to which those efforts had been corrupted by the exigencies of the difficult war in Iraq.

Two days later, *The New Yorker* published a report on Abu Ghraib by Seymour Hersh. Hersh won a Pulitzer Prize in 1970 for his reporting on the U.S. Army's atrocities in Vietnam; now he had come full circle, documenting the full extent of the abuses at Abu Ghraib and the Army's initial efforts to investigate them. Hersh's reporting—which forms the nucleus of his new book, *Chain of Command*—helped launch nearly a dozen different criminal investigations into what former vice president Al Gore dubbed "the American Gulag," the extraterritorial chain of prisons and detainment centers, stretching from Guantanamo Bay to Afghanistan, set up by the Bush administration to hold suspected terrorists. More than 300 instances of abuse in those facilities, from November 2001 to as recently as March 2004, have been alleged since then. To date, eight out of 11 investigations have been completed. They have produced thousands of documents, witness interviews, military orders, emails, and PowerPoint briefings, with each one telling a small piece of the story of how America's vaunted all-volunteer professional military lapsed into some of the most unprofessional and despicable conduct of its history. Forty-five soldiers have been recommended for courts-martial, and 23 others for summary discharge. Nearly one year after the first sadistic acts took place, the extent of the abuses remains unknown. But by all indications, the worst revelations are yet to come. In closed-door presentations before Congress, Pentagon officials revealed evidence of crimes ranging from the rape of female detainees to the sexual abuse of minors held at Abu Ghraib.

There is no doubt that the abuses at Abu Ghraib stand as an indelible stain on the honor of the American military. What is less clear is the degree to which the resulting scandal has damaged our national security

Phillip Carter is a former U.S. Army officer who now writes on national security issues for *The Washington Monthly*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld tours the Abu Ghraib detention center in May 2004.

U.S. Department of Defense

and undermined our efforts to bring peace to Iraq and win the war against radical terrorism—a war that is as much a fight for the political and moral high ground as it is a shooting war that pits American soldiers against Islamist ones. America suffered a huge defeat the moment those photographs became public. Copies of them are now sold in souks from Marrakesh to Jakarta, vivid illustrations of the worst suspicions of the Arab world: that Americans are corrupt and power-mad, eager to humiliate Muslims and mock their values. The acts they document have helped to energize the insurgency in Iraq, undermining our rule there and magnifying the risks faced by our soldiers each day. If Osama bin Laden had hired a Madison Avenue public relations firm to rally Arabs hearts and minds to his cause, it's hard to imagine that it could have devised a better propaganda campaign.

The damage done by Abu Ghraib might at least have been minimized had the administration pursued a strategy of publicly and sincerely holding accountable those responsible for it. Instead, it has done something close to the opposite. The Bush administration has condemned the abuses as the work of a "few bad apples," while working diligently to get the story off the front pages and out of the presidential campaign. In a meeting with Human Rights Watch executive director Kenneth Roth shortly after the scandal broke, reports Hersh, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice argued that the abuses resulted not from the president's policies in the war on terrorism, but from "implementation of policy" by the military. The various committees and commissions investigating the scandal have more or less abetted this line of defense. Discussing the results of the independent investigation into Abu Ghraib he chaired, former defense secretary James R. Schlesinger explained that while "institutional and personal responsibility" for the abuses went all the way to Washington, they were rooted in the sadism and brutality of a few individuals—"Animal House on the night shift," as he put it. While the military's civilian leadership was guilty of "indirect responsibility," Schlesinger told reporters, Donald Rumsfeld's resignation "would be a boon to all of America's enemies."

Go past the executive summaries and press releases, however, and a careful reading of the reports reveals a different story. The devastating scandal of Abu Ghraib wasn't a failure of implementation, as Rice and other administration defenders have admitted. It was a direct—and predictable—consequence of a policy, hatched at the highest levels of the administration, by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

senior White House officials and lawyers, in the weeks and months after 9/11. Yet the administration has largely managed to escape responsibility for those decisions; a month from election day, almost no one in the press or the political class is talking about what is, without question, the worst scandal to emerge from President Bush's nearly four years in office.

Defenders of the administration have argued, of course, that there is no "smoking gun"—no chain of orders leading directly from Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to Pfc. Lynndie England and her co-conspirators. But that reasoning—now largely accepted within the Beltway—betrays a deliberate indifference to how large organizations such as the military actually work. In any war, civilian leaders set strategic aims, and it falls to commanders and planners at successively lower levels of command to refine that guidance into executable orders which can be handed down to subordinates. That process works whether the policy in question is a good one or a bad one. President Bush didn't order the April 2003 "thunder run" into Baghdad; he ordered Tommy Franks to win the war and the Third Infantry Division's leaders figured out how to make it happen. Likewise, no order was given to shove light sticks into the rectums of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib. Nevertheless, the road to the abuses began with flawed administration policies that exalted expediency and necessity over the rule of law, eviscerated the military's institutional constraints on the treatment of prisoners, commenced combat with insufficient planning, preparation and troop strength, and thereby set the conditions for the abuses that would later take place.

But there's a reason why most of the investigations into Abu Ghraib have punted on the essential question of executive responsibility. To judge the administration's decisions to have been wrong, after all, requires us to discern what the right decisions would have been. And to do that, we must put ourselves in their shoes. Given the particular conditions faced by the president and his deputies after 9/11—a war against terrorists, in which the need to extract intelligence via interrogations was intensely pressing, but the limits placed by international law on interrogation techniques were very constricting—did those leaders have better alternatives than the one they chose? The answer is that they did. And we will be living with the consequences of the choices they made for years to come.

Breaking the law

War has always had its own codes and rules, but the modern laws governing armed conflict were developed during the 20th century, when industrialized nations fought large, mechanized, bloody wars of attrition. World Wars I and II—featuring aerial combat, bombing campaigns, chemical and trench warfare, and the slaughter of soldiers and civilians on an unprecedented scale—spurred the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, which laid out basic principles of conduct for civilized nations. These treaties aimed to distinguish between combatants and civilians, and to the extent possible, to minimize the suffering inherent in war. But like their predecessors—the prisoner-of-war treaty signed in Geneva in 1929, the Union Army's Lieber Code of 1863, the 1864 Geneva Convention, and the 1907 Hague Conventions, among others—the Geneva Conventions of '49 were fundamentally backward-looking, reflecting the dominant nature of warfare at the time: large air and land campaigns between states employing relatively symmetrical forces. When the treaties mentioned paramilitaries and non-state guerrillas, they were typically treated as bandits who played only a tangential role in the conduct of warfare. The conventions wholly failed to anticipate the wave of unconventional warfare that would sweep the world after World War II, from U.S. and British-sponsored guerillas in Greece to Communist-backed insurgents in Vietnam to the asymmetric warfare practiced by the terrorists of today. By the late 1990s, conflicts in the Balkans and elsewhere made it clear that paramilitaries, terrorists, and other irregular combatants—far from fighting on the margins—had become the principal security threat to much of the world, including the United States. Yet international law continued to treat them as mere criminals, best dealt with through indictments rather than artillery.

Such was the legal paradigm in place when al Qaeda attacked the nation on September 11, 2001. By the conventional laws of war, al Qaeda was neither a state nor a military; its operatives were neither soldiers nor civilians. Within weeks of the 9/11 attacks, the United States launched its armed response in Afghanistan—and, almost immediately, legal questions emerged which showcased the difficulty of pounding the round problem of al Qaeda into the square hole of existing international law. Unlike a national army, al Qaeda and the Taliban militia wore no conventional uniforms, and often did not operate in conventional units that could be identified or distinguished from the civilians among whom they hid. Most importantly, al Qaeda rejected the very notion of the laws of war, of protecting civilians when at all possible. Indeed, the terrorists' apocalyptic doctrine expressly made civilians—in their view, agents of Western cultural and economic imperialism—legitimate targets.

The inherent nature of stateless terrorism presented the Bush administration with another quandary, this one linked to the desperate need, in the months after 9/11, for reliable intelligence about the shadowy force that had just murdered more than 3,000 Americans. In a conflict between states, captured soldiers rarely possess strategically useful information; they may know about their own unit, or the plans for the next ground offensive, but rarely much more than that. A German corporal, or even a colonel, was unlikely to know much

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in 1944 about the big picture on the Western Front, let alone plans for V-2 strikes on London. Thus nations at war could, in the past, usually afford to treat prisoners relatively well—because doing so did not require trading away significant intelligence opportunities. The war on terror—an asymmetric war in which small numbers of combatants could inflict catastrophic damage—changed that equation. Unlike states, where the most important intelligence might concern evidence of a nuclear capability or the presence of tanks near the border, the most valuable intelligence about al Qaeda concerned its plans and intentions. Moreover, rank-and-file enemy operatives might well possess such information; were U.S. authorities to capture someone from a terror cell on the eve of its next attack, they couldn't afford simply to store him in a jail cell until the war was over. (Similar conditions obtained once the war in Iraq shifted from a conventional war fought largely between designated combatants to an insurgency fought between American soldiers on the one side, and a hodgepodge of guerrillas and irregulars on the other.)

In military terms, the global war on terror shifted the calculus of intelligence-gathering almost entirely towards human intelligence (HUMINT) of the kind that can only be produced through clandestine infiltration, interrogation, and other means. Satellites, surveillance systems, giant listening devices, and ground-penetrating radar won't alert the CIA and FBI to the next terrorist attack, or tell the U.S. Army where the insurgents have placed explosives on the highway between Fallujah and Baghdad. Yet here, too, the Bush administration had a problem: Over the years, the intelligence community's HUMINT capabilities had atrophied considerably, in favor of "technical" intelligence collection systems like satellites and electronic surveillance. Indeed, where the Middle East was concerned, the CIA, FBI, and military had virtually no HUMINT assets in place before or immediately after 9/11 to provide intelligence about the terror organization that had hit the United States. "At the time of the attacks, it's possible that there wasn't a single such [clandestine] officer operating today inside Islamic fundamentalist circles," Hersh writes in, based on what he says are extensive interviews with current and former officials in the U.S. intelligence community. Writing in the *Atlantic* in the summer of 2001, former CIA officer Reuel Marc Gerecht summed it up this way: "Operations that include diarrhea as a way of life don't happen." The only way to gather intelligence about global terrorism would be to extract it from the terrorists themselves.

Prisoner's dilemma

These problems converged with the first mass capture of prisoners at Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan in November 2001. Under the Geneva Conventions, prisoners of war are accorded certain rights and privileges—among them humane treatment, freedom from coercive interrogation, and repatriation at the end of active hostilities. But the Pentagon and CIA needed to gather HUMINT from these detainees about al Qaeda and its global terror network. As the Bush administration saw it, its choice was clear. Al Qaeda posed a clear and present danger. The nation desperately needed to gather intelligence about that threat. Either they could toss out the rule book and operate by any means necessary, or America would be attacked again.

Any president in that situation would have had to go beyond the bounds of existing law. But in truth, there were choices beyond either action or acquiescence. Well before Mazar-i-Sharif, legal scholars and philosophers had grappled with the question of whether a nation could ever justify the use of torture, assassination, hostage-taking, mass internment, and other measures. One course would have been to open up a series of narrow loopholes in the law, with tight oversight, and require that top leaders approve every use of extraordinary measures. This is more or less what former president Bill Clinton did during the 1990s, when he secretly signed an order essentially legalizing the assassination of Osama bin Laden should the opportunity arise. According to the order, the president had to personally sanction bin Laden's death—a measure framed largely at the insistence of Agency officials who wanted to ensure their agents would not be found culpable if anything went wrong. (In the end, when the opportunity did present itself—a planned 1998 raid by the CIA on the al Qaeda camp at Tarnak Farms near Kandahar—the Clinton White House was talked out of it.)

The other option was to sanction a wholesale abandonment of the law and delegate the responsibility for its violation down the chain of command to front-line troops. And that's precisely what the Bush administration did. They began with the plausible argument that the Geneva Conventions were anachronistic in an age of asymmetrical, non-state warfare. Al Qaeda didn't wear uniforms or fight according to the laws of war, they reasoned, and so they were not necessarily entitled to the conventions' protections. But the lawyers—including White House counsel Alberto Gonzales, Defense Department general counsel William Haynes II, Vice President Cheney's counsel David Addington, and Jay Bybee of the Justice Department (who now sits on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals)—went further. They advised the president to sign a blanket statement of policy that the men captured in Afghanistan would not be subject to the Geneva Conventions, and that by executive fiat, they would all be declared "unlawful enemy combatants," a category that does not exist in international law. White House, Justice Department and Pentagon lawyers also pushed President Bush to sign a secret finding on Feb. 7, 2002, that would have far-reaching consequences for the nation and the world. "I... determine that none of the provisions of Geneva apply

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to our conflict with al Qaeda in Afghanistan or elsewhere throughout the world," this document determined, adding that the White House also had "the authority under the Constitution to suspend Geneva as between the United States and Afghanistan, but I decline to exercise that authority at this time." For all intents and purposes, these memoranda gutted the Geneva Conventions.

Within months, those first legal memoranda were joined by more focused opinions from the administration's top lawyers, each authorizing specific tactics the Bush administration wanted to use in the global war on terrorism. In 2002 and 2003, attorneys in the departments of Justice and Defense drafted memoranda outlining what international and domestic law would allow with respect to "coercive interrogation" practices, eventually settling on a list of dozens of tactics, among them sleep deprivation and the use of stressful and painful physical positions. Such tactics, argued the lawyers, didn't run afoul of the Geneva Conventions because the President had already unilaterally declared those conventions null and void with respect to al Qaeda and other terrorist detainees. This opinion also rendered the U.S.'s own federal war-crimes statute impotent, because that law defines a war crime as a violation of the existing international laws of war, including the Geneva Conventions. To be enforced, that law depends on the existence of a Geneva Convention violation; similarly, the Uniform Code of Military Justice prohibits war crimes, but without a Geneva Convention violation, there was no war crime.

The Bush administration's memoranda also took an excruciatingly narrow view of the federal torture statute, essentially defining it out of existence for the purposes of interrogations in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay: "A defendant is guilty of torture only if he acts with the express purpose of inflicting severe pain or suffering on a person within his custody or physical control." In other words, interrogation tactics which accidentally result in severe pain or suffering were not enough to merit the label of torture. Only tactics which were specifically intended to cause severe pain and suffering—and performed by professional torturers with the knowledge of how their tactics would affect the body—would fit the definition under federal criminal law. Under this reasoning, amateur interrogators (such as the reserve military police soldiers assigned to Gitmo) could never be guilty because they lacked the skill and experience to know the exact causal links between their tactics and the pain and suffering those tactics would cause. The Justice Department also took the view that only someone who specifically intended to cause extreme pain and suffering, on the level of organ failure and death, would be guilty. This interpretation set a bar so high that virtually no prosecutor would ever be able to meet it in court, and opened the door to any use of coercive interrogation tactics that fell just shy of the "severe pain and suffering" threshhold. Justice's interpretation ensured no U.S. defendants would ever face torture charges and made the U.N. Convention Against Torture a dead letter too.

The Bush administration also chose Guantanamo as the site to hold detainees specifically because it was thought to be outside the reach of U.S. courts—and it was, until the Supreme Court ruled in June 2004 that detainees there had the right to ask a federal court for a writ of habeas corpus. In addition, the federal anti-torture statute excluded from jurisdiction military bases and diplomatic missions, such as Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, a loophole that would remain open until October 2004 when Congress closed it. Thus, in addition to stripping the detainees themselves of rights, the administration picked a place where the law simply had no force—Gitmo provided the perfect legal black hole in which to house detainees and practice the dark arts of interrogation.

One of the problems cited by the Schlesinger report was the disconnect between tactics authorized at Guantanamo, where "unlawful enemy combatants" were held and the Geneva Conventions did not apply, and the tactics authorized in Iraq where the president had said the Geneva Conventions did apply. As guidance from the top filtered down through several layers of command, it became unclear which methods were appropriate for which location, an ambiguity compounded by the movement of individual interrogators and guard force personnel between the two physical locations. One fateful decision was the one to "Gitmoize" the prison operation in Iraq in August 2003, a response to the blooming insurgency there and the failure of the U.S. military prisons in Iraq to produce intelligence about the insurgency. The Pentagon brought Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, the head of the Guantanamo Bay facility, to Iraq to make recommendations on how better to squeeze detainees for information. His prescription: "Detention operations must act as an enabler for interrogation... to provide a safe, secure and humane environment that supports the expeditious collection of intelligence." Miller imported a number of the non-Geneva Convention techniques from Cuba to Iraq to assist interrogators in gathering information, and by so doing reportedly turned on a spigot of human intelligence, leading, among other things, to the capture of Saddam Hussein. But in his own investigation of the Abu Ghraib abuses, Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba reported that this extension of Gitmo tactics to Iraq had only exacerbated confusion about what the Geneva Conventions did and did not authorize, and where Geneva applied, to the point that intelligence officers and military lawyers could not define any recognizable lines between the two modes of interrogation. Under the circumstances, it was almost inevitable that the techniques authorized for Gitmo would migrate over to Abu Ghraib.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The investigation by Maj. Gen. George Fay and Lt. Gen. Anthony Jones, which looked at the role of military intelligence units in the abuse scandals, backed up Taguba's findings. According to Gen. Paul Kern, who oversaw the Fay-Jones inquiry, "the people who were conducting the interrogations clearly were feeling a lot of pressure to produce intelligence, as they should have been. That's what the purpose of the interrogation is." But when they sought policy guidance and legal advice about what they could do to produce intelligence, they got directives back from headquarters "which were never in our view completely clarified ... in the end, [headquarters] did not absolutely make it clear what the boundaries were." An after-action report on the "legal lessons learned" from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, authored by the Army's Judge Advocate General ("JAG") school, found the same thing: "Detainees are a potential source of valuable information, and the motivation to extract that information through interrogation may sometimes create strong temptation to test the limits of the [law of armed conflict]. Questions often concerned the legality of specific proposed interrogation techniques." Army officers tend to understate these things, especially in after-action reports, so it's no surprise that Gen. Kern and the JAG school phrase their findings so circumspectly. But don't be fooled: This is the military equivalent of shouting from the rooftops.

The memoranda from the White House—signed by the commander-in-chief's top lawyer—stamped the interrogation tactics with the imprimatur of legality, ensuring that any dissent from the field would have been ignored.

The memos had another practical effect, which was the evisceration of any legal opposition from the ranks to the proposed methods of interrogations. Military units of a certain size are staffed with JAG officers, chaplains, and other professionals who typically serve as a unit's legal and ethical conscience. In formal and informal ways, they vet operational plans to ensure missions comply with the laws of war. According to Army doctrine, operational orders at the brigade level and above must contain an annex covering the legal implications of the plan, procedures for dealing with prisoners, and other issues. It's not clear to what extent the actions at Abu Ghraib were subjected to this sort of scrutiny before they were implemented. But even if a young JAG officer were to raise objections in the field, it's unlikely they would have gone anywhere. The memoranda from the White House—signed by the commander-in-chief's top lawyer —stamped the interrogation tactics with the imprimatur of legality, ensuring that any dissent from the field would have been ignored.

Finally, the memos directly affected the junior soldiers, like Pfc. England, who now stand accused of torturing Iraqi prisoners. Every new soldier learns in basic training that he or she must follow lawful orders when they are given. But they also learn they must disobey orders—to kill innocent civilians, for example, or torture detainees—that are unlawful, and they cannot invoke "superior orders" as a defense when those orders are illegal. The junior soldiers now charged with abuses at Abu Ghraib should have objected to any orders to abuse prisoners, because they were patently immoral and unlawful. But in reality, that's easier said than done. After all, the orders to interrogate prisoners by coercion had come from the very highest levels of the administration. They had been filtered through every level of the chain of command without objection. Senior administration lawyers with Ivy League credentials and decades of experience had approved these procedures, including some that were startlingly close to those depicted in the Abu Ghraib photographs, such as the use of stress positions and hoods. It may be unrealistic to expect that a junior enlisted soldier such as England, or even her immediate supervisor, Staff Sgt. Ivan Frederick, would have the knowledge or the temerity to contradict such orders when they were given. The effect of the Bush administration's exhaustively creative research into breaking the rules was virtually to ensure that every player in this tragedy went along and followed orders.

Unintended consequences

Two other decisions by the Bush administration also proved fateful, both of them made long before the Iraq war began. One was the administration's attempt—directed by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld—to run the Iraq war with fewer soldiers in place than considered military opinion believed necessary. The resulting shortage of troops set the conditions for abuse at the prison. The after-action report by the Army's JAG school specifically blames troop shortages for the chaotic and disorganized detainee operations in Iraq, sharply criticizing the decision to delay the deployment of the 800th Military Police Brigade—the unit responsible for Abu Ghraib—until well after combat had begun. From the moment it touched ground, the 800th was behind the eight ball, and it's not clear the brigade ever got a handle on the detainee mission.

"There was chaos at Abu Ghraib... there was a very low ratio of military police to the number of inmates, which ranged as high as 8,000," Schlesinger noted in announcing his panels' findings last summer. "At Guantanamo, which is something of a model, the ratio of mil-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

itary police to detainees was one to one. At Abu Ghraib, the ratio of military police was one to 75." Add in the pressure from the Bush administration to produce intelligence, and take away the legal constraints of the Geneva Conventions, and you can appreciate what a pressure cooker Abu Ghraib became. Even had there been no bad apples in the 372nd MP Company, with which Pfc. England served, abuses were almost inevitable.

The second fateful decision was to rush those troops that were allocated to Operation Iraqi Freedom into battle too quickly. During the first Gulf War, military planners set aside months to build a war machine in the Arabian desert, allowing units to stabilize and train together at length before the start of hostilities—time that was especially valuable to the hundreds of thousands of reservists called up for the war. (Indeed, it's worth noting that, although American soldiers took as prisoners tens of thousands of Iraqis soldiers during the first Gulf War, allegations of abuse were sparse.) But the second Gulf War was launched in a hurry, even before most of the forces assigned to it were in place. Many have pointed out that, had the Bush administration not "rushed to war," U.N. inspectors might have been able to show that Iraq had no WMD capability; at the very least, the White House would have had time to line up more support from our allies. Less widely understood is that a longer delay would have given military police and civil affairs units—most of which come from the reserves—time to arrive, acclimate, and train longer together, bringing them up to readiness levels approaching those of active duty troops.

The situation in Iraq deteriorated rapidly after the United States took Baghdad, with the result that reserve units had to be called up and immediately thrown into the fight. The 372nd MP Company hit the ground in Kuwait in May 2003, and was immediately sent into Iraq to patrol the town of Al-Hillah with Marines and Iraqi police units. Although its soldiers received pre-deployment training in the states after their February 2003 call-up, they received nothing like the pre-war training of their active-duty brethren in the Third Infantry Division, some of whom spent a year in the Kuwaiti desert before actually crossing into Iraq in March 2003. When the 372nd went into combat, it was not ready for war. Perhaps more importantly, the 372nd MP Company's training records indicates that it barely trained at all on handling prisoners of war, let alone managing a maximum-security prison even though "internment and resettlement" operations are a bread and butter MP mission. The Taguba report found that this unit and its parent headquarters—the 320th MP Battalion and 800th MP Brigade, both reserve units—suffered from chronically poor training, resourcing, and leadership. These problems within the MP units combined with atrocious planning and resourcing decisions in Washington to create a formula for disaster.

Creative tactics

The duty force at Abu Ghraib, then, had ambiguous policy guidance from Washington, too few men, and too little training. What happened next should hardly have been a surprise. Take, for example, the guards' implementation of the interrogation practices authorized by the Pentagon. Interrogation tactics like "sleep deprivation" sound entirely too sterile when taken out of context—after all, who hasn't been deprived of sleep, whether by a newborn baby or a last-minute project at work? What's crucial to understand is how such methods are translated into practice in the field. As Hersh writes:

> In May 2004, I interviewed a company captain in a military police unit in Baghdad who told me about an incident the previous fall in which he was approached by a junior military intelligence officer who requested that his M.P.s keep a group of detainees awake around the clock until they began talking. "I said, 'No, we will not do that,'" the captain said. "The M.I. commander comes to me and says, 'What is the problem? We're stressed, and all we are asking you to do is to keep them awake.' I ask, 'How? You've received training on that, but my soldiers don't know how to do it. And when you ask an eighteen-year-old kid to keep someone awake, and he doesn't know how to do it, he's going to get creative.'"

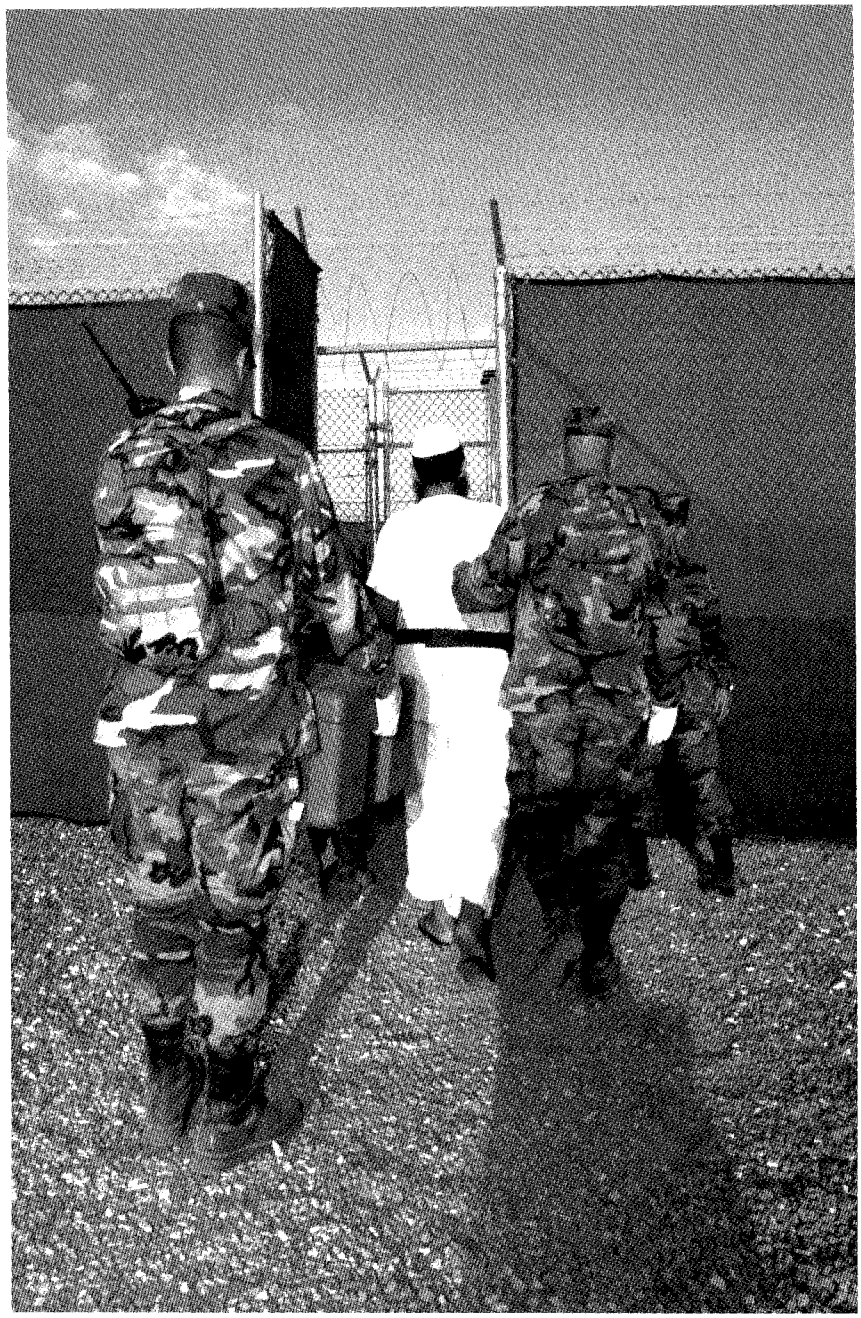
What, exactly, does "creative" mean? Consider the iconic image of Abu Ghraib: a hooded Iraqi man standing on an Army rations box with wires extending from his arms in a grotesque pose almost reminiscent of a crucifixion. It turns out that this was among the tactics employed by untrained prison guards and interrogators as a means both of instilling fear and of keeping a detainee awake, in faithful execution of the "sleep deprivation" tactic authorized by the secretary of defense. Even though the wires were actually inert, the detainee was likely told that he would be electrocuted if he moved off the box, which he would do if he fell asleep. And thus, so modestly-named a tactic as sleep deprivation was transformed into something far more sinister. The same tactic could be used in conjunction with the "stress position" technique approved by the Pentagon, according to one former intelligence officer I talked to. A hooded person forced to stand still on a box for hours will quickly lose his sense of equilibrium and orientation. Lower back pain will eventually develop from the strain of remaining upright for such a long time; pain in the legs and feet will follow as blood pools there. Held for several hours without movement, such a position can induce excruciating pain, particularly for detainees not in top physical condition. When the image first surfaced, these officers said they were not surprised by the tactic. It was merely a creative attempt by amateurs to achieve the results desired by their leaders—an unfortunate twist on the old maxim of Gen. George S. Patton:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do, and they will surprise you with their ingenuity."

Weighing torture

There are few slopes more slippery than the one from small war crimes to large ones, as evidenced by the incremental movement of U.S. interrogation tactics from "a little bit of smacky face," as one intelligence officer described the officially-sanctioned tactics at Gitmo to *The Wall Street Journal*, to the abuses depicted in the Abu Ghraib photographs. For decades, the laws of war have stood as a braking point on this slippery slope, establishing bright-line rules about what is forbidden even in the heat of combat. Generally speaking, absolute rules are the only ones that work well in wartime. Where only vague guidance exists, junior military leaders may exploit ambiguity to employ tactics that fall outside the boundaries of acceptable conduct. In war, there is always some battlefield exigency or necessity which can be invoked as a justification before or after the fact. It's one thing to argue that there was a compelling need for these tactics, and that therefore they were implicitly authorized in certain situations but always tightly controlled; it's quite another to loosen the rules altogether and let junior soldiers take the initiative to do what they think must be done.



A detainee is escorted to a facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

U.S. Department of Defense

If our political leaders decide that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed needs to be immersed in water so that he spills his guts about the next terror plot, I can accept that—and I suspect the rest of the world could, too. But those who take action should also take responsibility for it. Our soldiers need a better legal framework to deal with these situations, one that gives commanders the flexibility to do what must be done while not stepping on our values or hurting our strategic interests in the process.

First and foremost, the framework should maintain existing rules about treating prisoners, because those should govern all but the most extraordinary of cases. Second, when a departure is necessary, we should require authorization from the White House and Pentagon articulating both the scope of the authorization and the justification for doing so. Such authorizations might mirror the kind of court documents required of the Justice Department when it applies for a secret warrant under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. This will let our soldiers know why they are breaking the rules, and minimize the cognitive dissonance that led to so much confusion at Abu Ghraib about what was allowed and forbidden. Third, the services should actively rely on their lawyers, chaplains and career non-commissioned officers to serve as the legal, moral and institutional checks respectively on this kind of activity. All three of these systems failed at Abu Ghraib. Fourth, to the extent practical, we must add some measure of transparency to detention operations. The military can't publicize exactly what it's doing to interrogate prison-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ers, because that would destroy the value of these methods, but we should recognize the value of good publicity and let the Red Cross see as much as possible. Finally, the nation's political leaders must constantly reevaluate these departures from the law, to ensure we are getting something in exchange for our calculated decision to break the law. A measured approach to this problem will ensure that breaches of international law, if they must occur, will take place in an orderly and disciplined manner, allowing soldiers to resume their normal treatment of prisoners immediately afterwards. What's wrong is to loosen the restrictions across the board or abandon them altogether; once discipline is lost, it is nearly impossible to restore.

There's a reason why career military officers are among those who have expressed the greatest revulsion over the Bush administration's cavalier treatment of the laws of war. These officers aren't soft-minded idealists who believe in the rule of law for its own sake. Quite the contrary; three generations of military officers have grown up respecting the Geneva Conventions for extremely practical reasons. When the administration publicly declared in February 2002 that those conventions would not apply to the detainees at Guantanamo Bay, many of America's soldiers worried that this policy would be reciprocated by our nation's enemies, should Americans themselves ever be captured in a future conflict. It is worth noting that Secretary of State Colin Powell, who saw combat in Vietnam and helped run the first Gulf War, strongly opposed this move, as did his chief legal adviser, William Howard Taft IV. The principle of reciprocity has long served as one of the chief mechanisms for compliance with the laws of war. The Bush administration's approach has put future generations of U.S. military personnel in grave risk of mistreatment.

But our overriding of international law has also had much broader implications for U.S. interests. Although America's record in establishing and complying with the laws of war has stood the test of time, the rhetoric of realism and national interest reigned supreme during most of the Cold War; international law was relegated to the back burner. Something changed around the time of the first Gulf War. In his arguments for that war against Iraq, then-President George H.W. Bush invoked the language of international justice. The case for the first Gulf War hinged on international law and the need to maintain the rule of law among nations. Bill Clinton made similar arguments to justify American interventions in Haiti, Bosnia, and, most spectacularly, Kosovo, where principles of international justice were used to trump the principle of national sovereignty in order to justify the NATO air war against Serbia. Because we convinced the world that our interest was to apply international standards of conduct, the United States was able to make the case that the sovereignty of a country could be breached in the service of a larger moral and security goal—a major and salutary watershed in international affairs. Our embrace of those ideals magnified our power and increased the chances that we would succeed, as we did in Kosovo.

The Bush administration, however, has altered course. Few students of international law would have challenged America's near-instant retaliation against al Qaeda's Taliban hosts. But then came the decisions to cast aside the Geneva Conventions and then to invade Iraq without the sanction of the U.N. Security Council. These moves occurred at roughly the same time as the Bush administration's unilateral decision to scrap the Kyoto Protocol, withdraw from the International Criminal Court's Rome Treaty, and obstruct its implementation by negotiating deals to keep U.S. citizens out of its jurisdiction, and abandon the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty in order to pursue a missile-defense system. All of a sudden, the world's leader in international principles had become, in some sense, the world's scofflaw. To a

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation
(Required by 39 U.S.C.3685)

1. Publication Title: The Washington Monthly
2. Publication No.: 7046-403
3. Filing Date: October 2004
4. Issue Frequency: Monthly, except combined Jan/Feb and July/Aug
5. No. of Issues Published annually: 10 issues/year
6. Annual Subscription Price: $44.95
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: The Washington Monthly, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: The Washington Monthly, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005
9. Full Name and Complete Mailing Address of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Markos Kounalakis, Publisher, W.M. Corporation, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005; Paul Glastris, Editor in Chief, The Washington Monthly, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005; Christina Larson, Managing Editor, The Washington Monthly, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005
10. Owner: W.M. Corporation (a District of Columbia nonprofit corporation), 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgages, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: none

Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: October 2004

Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months	No. copies of single issues published nearest to filing date
Total No. Copies:	26,300	28,000
Paid and/or Requested Circulation:		
Paid/requested outside-county mail subscriptions stated on form 3541:	17,886	21,052
Paid In-County subscriptions stated on form 3541:	n/a	n/a
Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other non-USPS distribution:	3,654	5,031
Other classes mailed through USPS:	n/a	n/a
Total Paid/Requested Circulation:	21,540	26,083
Free Distribution by Mail (Samples Complimentary, and Other Free):		
Outside-county as stated on form 3541:	353	374
In-county as stated on form 3541:	n/a	n/a
Other classes mailed through USPS:	n/a	n/a
Free Distribution Outside the Mail:	1,105	950
Total Free Distribution:	1,458	1,324
Total Distribution:	22,998	27,407
Copies not Distributed:	3,302	593
Total:	26,300	28,000
Percent Paid/Requested Circulation:	93.7%	95.2%

I certify that all information furnished above is true and complete.
Claire Iseli, Business Manager

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

world accustomed to watching American invocation and support of the rule of law and the import of international institutions like the United Nations, WTO, and NATO, the reversal was startling.

It's true that the administration has garnered some human intelligence through its use of torture. Arguably, some intelligence gathered this way helped lead to the capture of Saddam Hussein in December 2003. But it's unlikely that torture would be a useful tool day-to-day; a vast body of literature on the subject indicates that, on the contrary, coercive interrogations tend to elicit unreliable intelligence more than they do useful information. And whatever gains have come from our use of torture have come at enormous cost—to the historic commitment of this nation to liberal ideals and the rule of law, to the safety of American soldiers, and to the ultimate national security of the nation. In warfare, the United States cannot succeed strategically simply by vanquishing its foes on the battlefield; it must secure the peace as well, which requires the winning of hearts and minds.

Nations at war could, in the past, usually afford to treat prisoners relatively well—because doing so did not require trading away significant intelligence opportunities. The war on terror changed that.

Regardless of America's past reputation, it cannot hope to ever win the popular support of a country unless it acts both with just cause and just means. As political theorist Michael Walzer has written, when a nation must prevail in the political and moral dimensions of conflict as well as the strategic and tactical theaters, the pursuit of justice becomes virtually a military necessity. No one can dispute that the United States won a stunning tactical victory over the Iraqi army in April 2003. But the perceived injustices committed by the United States during our subsequent occupation of Iraq may well deliver us a strategic defeat. Al Qaeda confederates, such as the Ansar al-Islam terror network operating inside Iraq, have incorporated the pictures from Abu Ghraib into their recruiting literature. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Tawhid and Jihad movement has also benefitted from the Abu Ghraib scandal, citing abuses of Iraqi women there as the justification for the kidnapping and beheading of several Western hostages. It is clear that Abu Ghraib has given Iraqi insurgents—and, potentially, terrorists around the world—a new *raison d'etre*.

Being seen as the good guys—and more importantly, actually being the good guys—helps to win battles on the ground, too. Those tens of thousands of Iraqis who surrendered during the two Gulf Wars did so because they believed they would be treated better as prisoners by the United States than as soldiers by the Hussein government. But in the wake of Abu Ghraib, more future battles fought by America will have to be fought to the death. Similarly, civilians in the places where we fight can no longer be expected to greet us as liberators. For as long as the memories of Abu Ghraib linger, our soldiers will be greeted with suspicion wherever they go.

The world will forgive—and indeed, secretly applaud—those occasions, such as Kosovo, where we ignore the letter of the law or sidestep international institutions in the service of an obviously greater good. What it will neither understand nor condone is the wholesale abandonment of the law. The Bush administration has cast the debate over the laws of war in all-or-nothing terms—either you can throw out the old laws of war, or do nothing to secure the nation against a terrorist attack. In many ways, this position resembles much of the administration's rhetoric in the war on terror and its bid for reelection: You're either with us or against us, for good or for evil, a supporter of American policy or a supporter of terrorism. But the world is far more complex than that. There was a third path between living with the anachronistic laws of war and rejecting them in favor of expediency. The Bush administration rejected that path, and now, every day, U.S. soldiers and Iraqi citizens are paying the ultimate price for its mistake. ◆

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Great Black Hope

What's riding on Barack Obama?

By Benjamin Wallace-Wells

Cory Booker was feeling good. The one time Newark, N.J., mayoral candidate had just given a widely lauded speech at a youth vote event at the Democratic convention in Boston. The party's kingmakers and talent scouts, who had taken an interest in the career of this young, handsome African-American Rhodes scholar during his campaign two years ago were thrilled to see him, and eager to game out with him how Booker might win his next run. "Operatives, glad-handers, and hacks," Booker recalled happily. When he talked to men and particularly women, they had a glimmer of awe in their eyes, as if a conversation with Booker might be a remembered event, something they'd someday recount for their kids. He could feel his head swelling, but it was okay to let your head swell sometimes, for a moment or two. And now here were two more excited white women, mouths open, and ready to gush. Booker leaned back and smiled his big, easy smile, and one of the women stuck out her hand... "I just wanted to congratulate you on your speech," she said. "It was so *stirring*—Mr. Obama."

"My head," Booker told me recently, compressing his hands to mimic a vice, "returned to its present size." Beyond sharing light skin, Barack Obama and Cory Booker look nothing alike. Obama, the Democratic candidate for Senate in Illinois, is rail-thin, with short, Brillo-like hair; his precise features and scrawny neck make him look like a bobblehead doll. Booker, who was an all-Pac Ten tight-end, is thick and broad-shouldered, with a clean-shaven head. Obama is reserved, rhetorically smooth and on message; Booker comes across as more eager, less experienced, and a little rougher around the edges. But the women's confusion wasn't just another embarrassing example of whites being unable to tell one black guy from another, or the more forgivable mistake arising from the fact that on that night, everyone at the convention was dying to meet Obama, the keynote speaker. For despite their physical differences, Booker and Obama share something fundamental: They are black

Benjamin Wallace-Wells is an editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Barack Obama at the 2004 Democratic Convention. *Getty Images.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

people whom white Americans can actually picture being president.

Booker has been told he might someday be the first black president since he was in grade school. He was raised in Harrington Park, N.J., the kind of well-off suburb where high-achieving, Ivy-bound students were the norm, and where it wasn't uncommon for teachers to wonder if a particular student at the top of his class might someday be president. Most years they wondered if they might have the first Jewish president or the first woman president on their hands; Cory's year, it was the first black president. Booker went to Stanford, then to Oxford; while there, he ran the L'Chaim Society, the Jewish students' organization, just because he was interested. (This fact still features prominently in his campaign literature.) After Oxford, Booker went to Yale Law, but rather than live in New Haven, chose to commute each day from a run-down housing project in Newark, a mostly-black, heap-of-junk port city in which Booker had never lived. "It's hard to not feel some responsibility towards the community," Booker told me, "like my generation should move things forward."

After winning a seat on the Newark City Council, and then a second term, Booker decided to run for mayor. Like many New Jersey politicians, Booker began to work the standard New York fundraising circuit. New York was wowed. "Cory was the easiest person I've ever had to raise money for," remembers R. Boykin Curry IV, a veteran Manhattan money manager and a Democrat, but the kind of centrist Democrat who thinks Bill Clinton sold out to the left. A friend had invited him to a Booker event at a local bar; he met the politician, and his knees began to buckle. "He is talking about school choice, about taking this city that's in absolutely abysmal shape and restoring it to its glory, and he's talking about models of urban renewal from Indianapolis to what Giuliani did—he absolutely got it, he got the way cities have to move into the modern world," Curry told me. "There's a black politician speaking to you, and you can't get out of your mind that he's as charismatic and clever as Clinton, and at once you're jealous you're not him and you think, my God, I've got to do everything I can to get this guy elected." A fever was building. *Time* profiled Booker; "CBS Evening News" did, too. Though Booker was still only a councilman in America's 63rd largest city, Democratic fundraisers and operatives were also talking about a future White House bid; *The New York Times* said he was "regularly referred to as someone who will end up the first black President of the United States."

Then Booker lost. His opponent, incumbent Newark mayor Sharpe James told newspapers and television during the campaign that he didn't believe Booker was black enough to be mayor of Newark, and the incumbent's campaign was accused of spreading rumors that Booker was Jewish. (Flyers appeared in Newark's wards depicting the Rhodes scholar with a stretched, Semitic nose). A veteran machine pol, James also worked his base to the bone, cornering the union endorsements and playing up his generous patronage in a city where government is the biggest employer. He effectively portrayed Booker as too brainy, too earnest, and too babe-in-the-woods to play political hardball in a place like Newark—a figment of some white guy's dream, not a guy you could count on when the bus drivers threatened to strike. Booker lost by 3,000 votes, out of 53,000 cast. The candidate has since quit the city council, though he still lives in the housing project. Booker has set up a law firm on the top floor of the tallest building in Newark, looking out over a city of run-down rowhouses. The office also holds his campaign headquarters: Booker is running against James again, with the election two years away.

The feeling of rapture that Booker inspired has come to define a whole line of African-American politicians who have been touted as the next first black president. There was the excitement surrounding then-Virginia governor L. Douglas Wilder, a Korean War hero and budget-balancing moderate, when he launched his brief presidential run in 1991. There was the widespread clamor during the mid- and late-1990s for retired Gen. Colin Powell to run for president. And there was the boomlet of enthusiasm during the last few years—albeit mostly limited to Washington insiders—for Rep. Harold Ford, Jr. (D-Tenn.), the handsome, green-eyed "Blue Dog" Democrat, which culminated in his ill-fated bid to become House Minority Leader.

It is often said that America isn't ready for a black president. And it is true that most of today's most prominent African-American politicians would have a hard time winning large numbers of white votes, both because of lingering racial resentments and a sense among whites that black politicians don't necessarily share their values and interests. Yet there are a few black politicians for whom their race isn't a ball-and-chain, but a jet engine—the feature that launches them into stardom. For all of Colin Powell's gifts as a soldier and diplomat, he probably would not consistently rank as the most admired public official in America if he were white. For all of Obama's brilliance and eloquence, it is hard to imagine that he would be a national figure at this early stage of his career, if not for his African father.

For this small group of black politicians, race has been an advantage because whites see in them confirmation that America, finally, is working. Blacks, after all, aren't just any minority, the moral equivalent of Asian-Pacific Islanders but six times the size. They are the victims of much of our country's most vicious oppression, the cause of our deepest historical divisions, the stubborn counter-example that suggests our system isn't as fair or just as we would like it to be. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There are a few black politicians for whom their race isn't a ball-and-chain, but a jet engine—the feature that launches them into stardom.

act of redressing these injustices has absorbed much of the political and emotional energy in America for 150 years. And while all Americans can take some pride in what racial progress African Americans have made in recent years, what whites—and indeed blacks—really want is for the whole awful nightmare behind them. The ultimate proof that we have finally done so would be for a black person to be elected president of the United States. In Barack Obama or Colin Powell, whites, giddily, begin to see not only figures who can command both white and black votes but also the promise of a real racial unity. Their candidacies are thrilling because they carry with them the notion that the symbolic gap between the races may be beginning to close.

The handful of black politicians who tap this vein of political yearning share certain qualities. They have all been highly successful within the post-war institutions that have done the most to integrate American society and help develop black leaders: the U.S. military (Wilder and Powell) and elite universities (Booker, Ford, and Obama). Consequently, all give off the sense that they have transcended traditional racial categories, by signaling in their speech and demeanor, their personal narratives and career achievements, that they fully share in the culture and values of mainstream America; they are able to transcend race through the simple fact of their class. Just as importantly, they also transcend ideology by declaring with their rhetoric and policy positions a self-conscious independence from the conventional politics of their parties.

To require that politicians transcend both race and ideology is, of course, an almost impossible standard, and one that white politicians needn't meet at all. That may explain why each of these African-American figures share another quality, one with echoes of the debate over affirmative action—a sense that the ferocious political appetite for their candidacies has pushed them into something that they're not quite ready for. That's certainly the private fear of many of Obama's most passionate admirers. "As wonderful as Barack is, the one thing you wonder is if we haven't made him out to be something more than it's possible for him to be," a prominent Virginia Democratic fundraiser who had worked up close with Wilder told me. "So much is expected of him."

Four years ago, the same could have been said about Cory Booker. And so, the most compelling question about the politics of race right now may be this: Is Booker the next Barack Obama? Or is Obama the next Cory Booker?

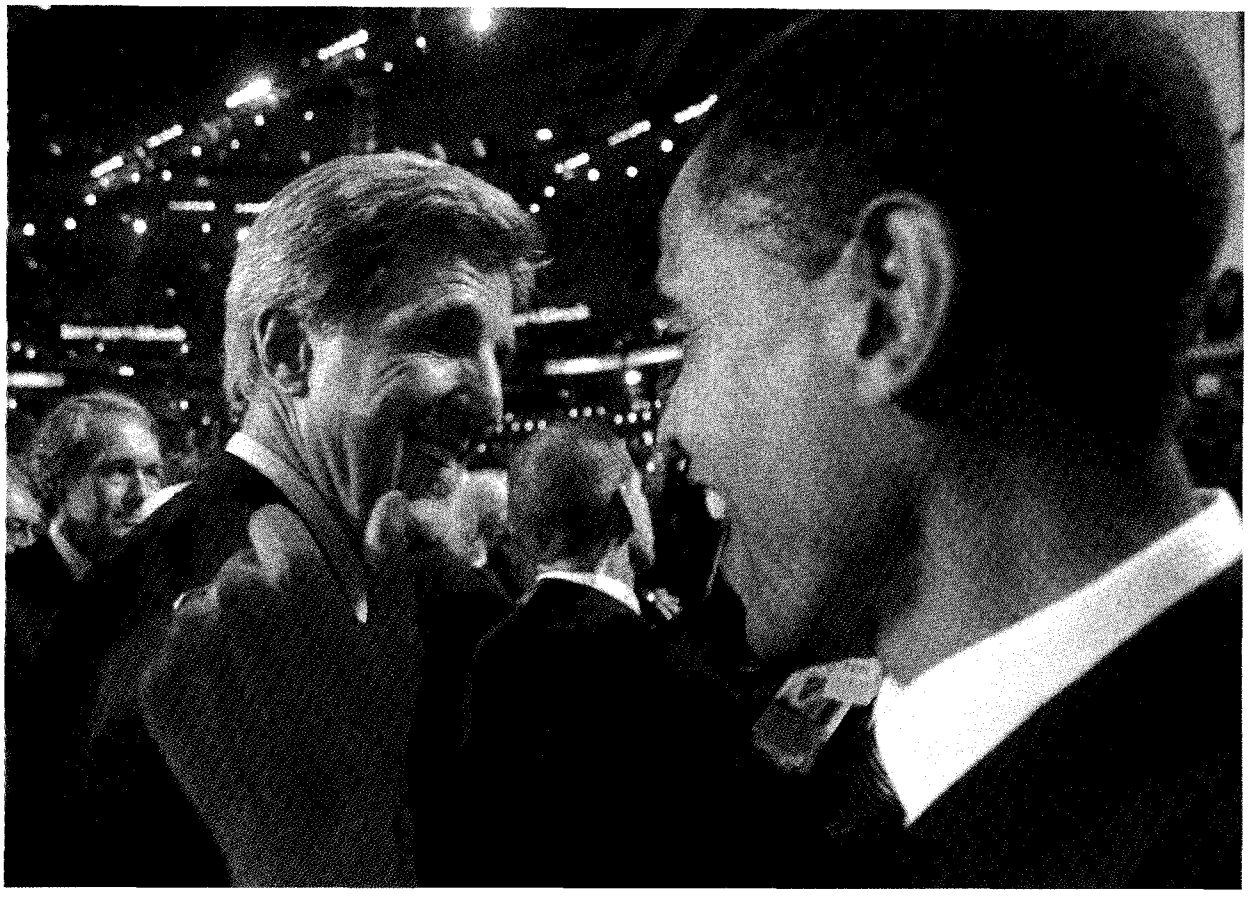
Black man's burden

By the night he spoke at the Democratic Convention in late July, the expectations for Obama seemed almost unfulfillable. All spring and summer, reports had trickled back to Washington about this guy with an odd name out in the provinces, a reputedly brilliant speaker and political neophyte who was running a strong campaign in a Democratic primary crowded with veterans. He was respected in the state Senate, it was said, as a bipartisan dealmaker so talented that he could pass liberal bills taking measures to limit racial profiling and put cameras in police interrogation rooms, to prevent forced confessions. Obama's reputation grew after he beat his better-known opponents for his party's nomination; then was leading his Republican opponent, a handsome, charismatic investment banker named Jack Ryan, by 20 points before Ryan had to drop out of the race after a sex scandal. (State Republicans chose Alan Keyes, the black, conservative former presidential candidate, to replace Ryan). Finally, Obama was selected to give the keynote address at the convention. The thrill that accompanied the reports of Obama's presence made it sound as if people had discovered the Messiah in Illinois.

The television talking heads, though they shared the excited anticipation for Obama, spent most of their pre-speech minutes wondering if this nobody could possibly fulfill these expectations. When Bill Clinton had been picked to give his keynote in 1988, after all, he had been a three-term governor, and arguably the most articulate Democrat of the last half of the 20th century, and flunked it.

Yet the night Obama delivered a speech that, even in the company of the party's most masterful orators, was clearly the most memorable of the convention. It began, like the buzz about Obama had, with the thing that is most instantly interesting about the candidate: his background. Obama is the son of a white mother from Kansas and a black father from Kenya who left the family when Barack was three. Barack grew up careening around the Pacific Rim, from Indonesia to Hawaii, a set of locales that seem the backdrop less for a political epic than a surfer flick, before education in a series of tony private schools ending with Harvard Law, where he was the first black president of the law

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Getty Images

review. Armed with a J.D., Obama moved to Chicago and became a constitutional law professor and a community activist, pushing for voter registration and better public housing, before eventually running for a seat in the Illinois State Senate. What was perhaps most brilliant about Obama's speech at the convention, and indeed about much of his campaign, was the way in which he revamped his unusual, foreign-seeming biography so that it fit the central American political myth, the ascent from the Log Cabin, with a post-racial 21st-century spin. The half-Kenyan kid became Abe Lincoln. Isn't it unlikely, Obama tells all his audiences, "that a skinny kid with a funny name from the South Side of Chicago" could be where he is today. (In some ways perhaps not so unlikely: He was the son of a single mother, but he also went to prep school and has degrees from Columbia and Harvard).

Looking at Obama, Americans saw a political character that they'd never quite encountered before. He was black, but not quite. He spoke white, with the hand-gestures of a management consultant, but also with the oratorical flourishes of a black preacher. Joining him on stage were his wife, a black lawyer from Chicago's South Side, and what must have been the two most attractive political kids this side of John Edwards. They looked like a Gap ad.

Throughout his speech, Obama made himself as hard to peg politically as he had been racially, casting himself as a politician who didn't proffer typically liberal solutions to cultural problems: "Parents have to teach, that children can't achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets and eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white." Obama argued that his party could see beyond big government. "The people I meet in small towns and big cities and diners and office parks, they don't expect government to solve all of their problems. They know they have to work hard to get ahead," he said. "Go to the collar counties around Chicago, and people will tell you they don't want their tax money wasted by a welfare agency or the Pentagon." The import was hard to miss: Obama was casting himself as an unorthodox intellectual independent.

He closed his address with one of the successful pieces of political oratory in years; its target was the idea of labels altogether. "There's not a liberal America and a conservative America... a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America," Obama said, booming now. "The pundits like to slice and dice our country into red states and blue states... But I've got news for them, too. We worship an awesome God in the blue states, and we don't like federal agents poking around our libraries in the red states." This was thrilling for viewers, an attack that didn't seem mean or cynical, because it was leveled not against any individual but against a glib, divisive intellectual construct that many people were growing sick of. On Larry

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

King's post-game wrap, even crotchety Bob Dole smiled his lopsided smile. "I gave him an A," Dole said, looking positively giddy. Obama had managed to exceed even the supremely high expectations for his speech with the most deft use of his race that any politician has managed in a long time. Masterfully, Obama had used race to unite.

Populists and virgins

Obama's rhetoric that night couldn't have been more different than that of the veteran black politicians who have come before him. Unlike the Ivy League-educated Obama, most of that older generation of black politicians came to elected office in the wake of the civil rights movement in the only way that was open to them, as mayors or congressmen representing constituencies that are mostly black. Their policies reflected that—and still do. These politicians tend to favor government spending for jobs and social programs in the cities, and have a generally liberal disposition. In style they run the gamut from the strident Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) to the affable Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.). But the leaders of this generation are, like former Reps. Tip O'Neill (D-Mass.) or Dan Rostenkowski (D-Ill.), all essentially ethnic politicians, devoted to the narrow needs of their constituencies, and so their ability to appeal broadly to white voters has been limited.

A decade and a half ago, African-American politicians began to break out of this civil rights era box. On the Republican side were a handful of black conservatives, including former Rep. J.C. Watts (R-Okla.) and perennial candidate Alan Keyes, who emerged as the antithesis of the Rangels and the Waterses. They have argued that traditional big government liberalism has hurt blacks more than it has helped them—a strategy that hasn't earned them many black votes, but won these African-American politicians a following among white conservatives partial to the notion that a low-tax, small government philosophy could solve problems of poverty and race, too. This faith energized conservatives, but was as limiting as the civil-rights agenda, keeping politicians like Watts from drawing votes from any but committed Republicans.

Around the same time, a new political character emerged, one that could, and did, win statewide office. Its most recognizable incarnations were one term Sen. Carol Moseley Braun (D-Ill.), former New York State comptroller H. Carl McCall, and the current lieutenant governor of Maryland, Michael Steele. They came through integrated institutions: Braun, a favorite of the multi-ethnic Chicago machine, had been Cook County Recorder of Deeds; Steele, a Republican who in recent weeks has become the GOP's cable show surrogate of choice, was a lawyer and entrepreneur; and McCall had been a banker and corporate boardroom fixture whose voice always had a tinge of Dartmouth in it. They were educated, successful, and were not seen by whites as culturally alien. But they also were wholly conventional partisans, captains of ideologically unrocked boats; they won office by picking up loyal party voters—they crossed racial lines but not political ones, and so have generated no great national excitement. Even when, in 1992, she was elected to become the first black senator since Reconstruction, few thought Braun might someday be president.

But there was also Doug Wilder, who became governor of Virginia in 1989 by voicing a very different politics. The symbolic import of Wilder's win seemed profound: A black man was now running the home state of the Confederacy and Robert E. Lee, from a city whose prettiest avenue is dotted by monuments to the Confederate dead. But more important was Wilder's political idiosyncraticity: He favored both balanced budgets and tougher measures on crime. As the national Democratic Party struggled to move itself to the center, Wilder came to seem a perfect symbol of what the party could become. National press outlets from *U.S. News & World Report* to CBS News ran profiles wondering whether Wilder might be the first black president, and his supporters, buoyed by donations from Democratic fundraisers around the country, began making plans for a run at the White House. But Wilder's formal presidential candidacy would turn out to be a failure. It lasted nine months, and Wilder won his biggest headlines for his weird struggle with Jesse Jackson, whom Wilder alternately embraced and accused of undermining black support for his candidacy. Wilder's policies were a muddle, too; it was hard to could figure out whether he stood with the liberals or the centrists.

That Wilder was no fluke became evident in the mid-1990s, as speculation intensified that Gen. Colin Powell—who had approval ratings of 80 percent, and who had been courted by both parties—might run for president. Powell had a careful manner, and had won a war. But, most importantly, Powell's political independence was practically virginal. When he did finally join the Republicans, it was on an independent's terms; he retained positions that cut against conservative orthodoxy, supporting affirmative action, abortion rights, increased federal funding for after-school programs and more.

Following in Powell's footsteps was Rep. Harold Ford Jr., (D-Tenn.). At 26, Ford had taken over the inner-city Memphis seat of his father, an old-fashioned populist of the civil-rights generations. Harold Jr. went out of his way to distance himself from his father's politics, running in a very liberal district as a conservative, "Blue Dog" Democrat—with an eye, pundits said, on statewide or even national office. He was talented, too. After he had delivered a widely praised keynote speech at the Democratic Convention in 2000, pundits and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

political insiders praised him as a rising political star. Ford ran against Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), the party's ordained candidate, for House Minority Leader in 2002, arguing that his centrist would better serve the caucus in the post 9/11 era. He was crushed in the leadership vote, with veteran congressmen scoffing to newspapers about this 31-year- old kid who could presume to lead them.

Plumbers and grandmothers

Like Wilder, Powell, and Ford, Obama has crafted a way of signaling his political independence: He tells people what they don't want to hear. At fundraisers on Chicago's lavish North Side, he tells his wealthy supporters that he'll hike their taxes. At union halls, he tells the workers that the drain of jobs to India and China is inevitable, and that there's nothing he can do to prevent it. To inner-city, he says that parents need to turn off their televisions and teach their kids some discipline.

In early October, I watched Obama give a speech and take questions at a forum in downtown Chicago, in a black church with stained glass windows of Jesus saving whites. The audience was a Chicago out of an early Saul Bellow novel: old Polish men with huge hearing aids, union-looking guys with thick, bristling mustaches, conservative bankers who asked pointed questions about Israel, black aunts bused in church vans from the West Side.

Before his audience, Obama told a fortyish man worrying about taxes that government will have to do more to help the middle-class, not less, and that limiting taxes shouldn't be his narrow political priority. He told a white-haired woman peace activist who criticizes Israel that the Palestinians are in the wrong, and then when this appears to encourage a pro-Israel man, tells that guy that the Israelis are far from perfect, too. Obama was measured throughout; he tends to come off as an expert and wonk, an earnest, hopeful policy nerd. A group of older black women asked, humbly, for vague assurances that he would redirect federal housing policy to emphasize low-rise, rather than high-rise, projects—most housing advocates think low-rise buildings would be easier to police and maintain, and encourage more neighborly interactions. The grandmas were throwing him a softball, hoping only for a signal that he was open to their concerns, that he would side with the experts. Obama was having none of it. "Low-rise isn't going to solve all your problems," Obama said sternly. "I've worked in the projects, and, let me tell you, low rise has problems of its own." The particular lady who had asked the question looked rebuked, and there was a surprised wince in the church: Did he really just say that to a bunch of trapped-in-the-projects grandmas?

"Obama tells you the hard truths, and other politicians, particularly from Chicago, they tend to tell you what they think you want to hear," Lowell Jacobs told me. Jacobs is a retired plumber in Rock Falls, Ill., a grimy old steel mill town at the western edge of Dennis Hastert's district; he is also the chair of the Democratic county commission, and was one of only two chairmen outside of the Chicago region to endorse Obama in the Democratic primary this year. "Barack's got something different," Jacobs told me. "He makes you feel like he's not a politician, but a leader."

A dream spurred

The pressure will be on Obama from the moment he is sworn in as the junior senator from Illinois in January (though I'm writing before election time, permit me the assumption that Obama, up 40 points in the polls over opponent Alan Keyes, will win). Obama will be in a position like none of his colleagues save Hillary Clinton. His every move will be scanned for signs that he's preparing for a presidential run. Even among his most passionate supporters, there's a concern that before Obama runs, he should learn to walk. (Fortunately for those supporters, Obama seems already to understand this. In nearly every interview he gave during the campaign, he turned questions of broad national and international issues into answers about what he would do for the people of Illinois—a pretty good sign that he'll spend his first years in the Senate learning the ropes.) Certainly, there's a not-quite-ready quality that has dogged those who have come before him on the national stage: Wilder hadn't yet figured out his politics. Powell got cold feet. Booker, in his first run, showed he didn't yet have the political skills. Ford reached too high, too fast, with too little support. The quality that these leaders share is uncomfortably close to the fear we all have about affirmative action, the worry that in our desire to integrate blacks into our leadership, we elevate some too quickly before they're fully prepared.

But, like it or not, that's just how American politics works, and always has. In the late 19th century, the Republican Party was operating a shameless affirmative- action program for retired Union generals from Ohio. The result was a string of mediocre presidents. In the late 20th century, Democratic Party politics created a powerful market for moderate Southern governors. The result was one middling president, Jimmy Carter, and one pretty good one, Clinton. Politics has its archetypes and its demands, and they will be heard. There's now an emerging market for a certain kind of black president, the fulfillment of which will be both harder and, potentially, more powerful than any archetype we've seen before. It might be Obama, or it might be Cory Booker, or it might be someone else entirely. But chances are, somewhere in America, that person is watching Obama's career carefully, and dreaming. ◆

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stunned Guns

How we've made the FBI too timid to bug mosques—or Ken Lay's office.

By Richard Gid Powers

One of the strangest things about the 9/11 Commission's report is that the FBI, whose intelligence failures during the summer of 2001 had been the most glaring of all the security agencies, actually managed to get itself... *promoted.* The Bureau's jurisdiction over domestic counterterrorism remains intact, its leadership has been left in place, its authority increased by the Patriot Act, and its budget for 2005 upped by Congress beyond what either President Bush or FBI Director Robert Mueller had requested. For close watchers of the Bureau, all of this came as something of a shock. Virtually everyone in Washington and the intelligence community had expected the FBI to have its wings severely clipped, particularly after former Senate intelligence committee chairman Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) had joined many other critics to charge that the FBI's failures were so deeply rooted in its "risk-aversive" institutional culture that it could no longer be trusted to carry out domestic intelligence work. Shelby and other critics had recommended an entirely new agency (modeled on Britain's MI5) be created to gather domestic intelligence.

But when the Commission's report came out in August, it noted the praiseworthy changes Mueller had been making at the FBI in the interim—refocusing the Bureau's agents on intelligence work and making structural reforms to speed the flow of information and make the FBI more nimble and responsive. The Commission congratulated Mueller for "significant" though "far from complete" progress in transforming the Bureau into what agents have begun to call—not derisively, one hopes—the "Federal Bureau of Intelligence." Commission Chair Thomas Kean said of Mueller: "We think he's doing exactly the right thing." Shelby's recommendations were all but forgotten, and with George Tenet's forced resignation from the CIA, Mueller's FBI became the major intelligence player in town.

Official Washington's renewed faith in the FBI is far from misplaced. The new, well-thought-out measures Mueller has taken to reform the Bureau have the FBI focusing on terror more precisely and intently than it ever has before. The question, however, is whether it will continue down that path. And the Bureau's history suggests that unless Congress takes an active role in keeping the FBI on task, the mission's focus is likely to waver, and an institutional nervousness that has in the past kept it from taking on essential, politically delicate investigations is likely to reemerge.

In the wake of intelligence scandals in the 1970s, when former FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's outrageous abuses of domestic surveillance were exposed, the reaction of lawmakers and the public was, overwhelmingly, to turn against the whole idea of domestic intelligence. The FBI had so deeply internalized this aversion that in the wake of Spring of 2001, when I asked the assistant director in charge of the National Security Division, Neil Gallagher, what the Bureau was doing to fight terrorism, he simply told me, "We're not violating anyone's civil liberties." That, as would become evident during the 9/11 Commission hearings, was simply Bureau code for not doing anything at all. And, tragically, it turned out that the only thing that might have changed the outcome of 9/11 was precisely the sort of targeted, patient domestic surveillance that the Bureau no longer had any taste for.

Richard Gid Powers is professor of history at the College of Staten Island and the CUNY Graduate Center. This article is adapted from the forthcoming book, *Broken,* by Richard Gid Powers to be published by The Free Press, an imprint of Simon & Schuster, Inc, N.Y. Copyright 2004 by Richard Gid Powers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But such extreme political sensitivity is really nothing new for the FBI. Throughout its history, the Bureau has shunned those assignments that could have helped the nation the most but which also ran the risk of getting the Bureau into political hot water—jobs like busting crooked politicians or corporate criminals. It is no exaggeration to say that the FBI has the talent, the resources, and the experience to do whatever is required to accomplish any law enforcement or intelligence mission which the nation assigns it. But too often, over the years, our criticism has kept the Bureau from doing the really important work—we trained the FBI, like a dog that has been beaten too often for barking, not to bark at all.

Communication breakdown

For all its institutional dysfunction, the FBI had in fact come tantalizingly close to the 9/11 conspiracy during the summer of 2001. No one can say with any certainty that even if the Bureau had pursued all its leads vigorously and effectively, it could have spared the country the 9/11 attacks. But the FBI did *not* pursue those leads—and they were very good ones—either vigorously or effectively.

For two years before the attacks, the whole American intelligence community—the FBI, CIA, and the Defense Intelligence Agency—had been getting vague reports that bin Laden was planning to strike inside the United States. One CIA report, not passed to the FBI, said he was considering using commercial pilots in a "spectacular and traumatic" attack on the country.

But such warnings were non-specific, almost theoretical. The FBI had much firmer leads it should have acted on. On July 10, 2001, FBI agent Kenneth Williams of the Phoenix field office sent Washington headquarters an "electronic communication" that pointed directly to the unfolding conspiracy. Williams had been watching several Middle Eastern men in his area for more than a year and had noticed that a number of them were taking flight instruction at the local branch of a prominent flight school. Williams suspected these men might be part of a coordinated campaign by Muslim extremists to use civil aviation to attack the United States. But Williams's memo went nowhere at headquarters, after being routed to units within the Bureau's counterterrorism section in Washington. There, specialists worried that Williams's suggestion that the FBI look into Middle Eastern men taking flight lessons "might raise racial profiling issues," so they shelved his memo. Because the Bureau was so gun shy about getting caught even in the neighborhood of a civil liberties violation, it never did look to see if there were other "Middle Eastern men" getting pilot training elsewhere in the nation. And there certainly were.

A month after Williams's tip, headquarters got another lead just as good, maybe even better. Tipped off by alert flight instructors at the Pan American International Flight School in Minnesota, FBI agents from the Minneapolis field office arrested a French-born Moroccan student pilot named Zacarias Moussaoui. Moussaoui had asked for time on Pan American's Boeing 747 flight simulator—a strange request, because that machine was usually used only by newly hired airline pilots or by veteran airline pilots refreshing their skills. Moussaoui was arrested for a passport violation, but when agents from the Minneapolis office asked headquarters to broaden the investigation, they were accused of trying to get leadership "spun up" about a merely conjectural threat. The Minneapolis agents had to spend the next four weeks trying push their application for a warrant to search Moussaoui's computer and personal effects through bureaucratic mazes set up by headquarters supervisors and lawyers. They got nowhere. Their application was even sabotaged by headquarters officials who seemed far more worried that a judge or a reporter might someday criticize the Bureau for proceeding with a less than airtight case than that they might be letting a plot against America proceed with impunity.

The Phoenix and Minneapolis field offices had given the FBI leads that were at least as good as those the Bureau had gotten in any of the great cases of its history. Had the Minneapolis agents been able to pursue their Moussaoui leads before 9/11 (as they finally did after the attacks), they would have quickly discovered an alarming connection between Moussaoui and bin Laden's personal pilot—who had trained at the Norman, Okla., flight school where Moussaoui had begun his flying lessons, and who had begun cooperating with the Bureau after the East African embassy bombings. The FBI would have also learned that Moussaoui was receiving large sums of money, perhaps for a hijack team he would lead. And if headquarters had also been investigating the names Williams had furnished in his electronic communication, the Bureau would have been led to the imam who was the hijackers' spiritual leader in San Diego, and the imam of the mosque where two of the hijackers worshipped. They would have then seen the significance of an Aug. 27, 2001, tip from the CIA that those two hijackers, both of whom had recently been added to the terrorist watch list, had arrived in the country. The Bureau had an informant in San Diego who could have been sent to make inquiries that might well have tightened the noose around those two. A simple credit-card trace would have found them—both used VISA cards in their own names to buy tickets on the hijacked planes.

But one reason these great leads went nowhere was because the FBI had not developed the web of informants it would have needed in order to pursue them quickly and effectively. It is true that most of the Bureau's great espionage and criminal cases were cracked by what seem to have been lucky breaks—walk-ins from the Woman in Red or from a defecting Soviet agent—but in all of these cases, the FBI had already collected information from domestic surveillance and set up networks of informants to exploit those fortunate leads. But by 2001, the Bureau, in the opinion of Clinton and Bush terrorism expert Richard Clarke, didn't "know whether or not there was anything going on in the United States."

After the assassination of the Zionist leader Meir Kahane in 1990, and certainly after the first bombing of the World Trade Center three years later, it was obvious to the entire law enforcement and intelligence community that a radical, well-organized Muslim extremist underground had taken root in the United States, financed and organized overseas, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eager to inflict profound damage on America. So why was the FBI not keeping its eye on this threat? Why did it not turn these early Islamic terror attacks into comprehensive "enterprise-wide" investigations that might have given the Clinton and Bush administrations justification to root out these organizations and their bases overseas, if necessary by armed force, long before 9/11? Because the Bureau had long ago lost the ability to learn about what was going on in potentially dangerous groups in the United States. It had deliberately blinded itself because it had decided that the country did not want, and would not tolerate, domestic surveillance until after a crime had been committed—if even then.

In the 1930s, pop culture celebrated the FBI in magazines, movies, and radio shows.

Small-time crooks

This FBI defense mechanism of shying away from cases—often the most important ones—when it doubts it has political or public support for pursuing them has been a persistent institutional deficiency throughout the Bureau's history. And this failure represents a tragic flight from its original mission. The Bureau was founded to do great things, and only great things. Had it acted on that principle, devoting itself to only the most difficult and important areas of investigation, 9/11 might have turned out very differently.

The FBI can trace its origins to an 1871 appropriation for the "detection of crimes against the United States" intended to equip the Justice Department to fight the Ku Klux Klan. The Bureau was formally organized in 1908 to give the Justice Department the means to investigate corrupt congressmen and senators who were pillaging the public lands. The Bureau's founders, President Theodore Roosevelt and his Attorney General Charles Bonaparte, expected that the FBI would continue to concentrate exclusively on those types of crime too sensitive and difficult for anyone else to tackle: high-level political corruption and corporate crime, national and international organized crime, and eventually, espionage and threats to national security.

This was—and remains—a great charge. But no sooner had Roosevelt and Bonaparte left office in 1909 than the new Bureau began to edge away from the course they had set. The FBI began to devote most of its resources not to high-level crime but to those individual offenses against persons and property that fell within its jurisdiction. The cases the Bureau picked tended to involve politically unpopular figures or organizations that were guilty of not much more than their unpopularity (socialists, union organizers, racial or ethnic minorities). Sometimes the FBI also conducted manhunts for street criminals who had captured the imagination of the sensationalistic press (like John Dillinger), or launched crusades against men or women who had become symbols of social problems: prostitution, drugs, or, more recently, Internet pedophilia. In 1910, for example, Congress passed the Mann Act to combat interstate and international prostitution rings. The Bureau, instead of investigating national and international white slavery, began to arrest individual prostitutes and their clients. The most sensational of these cases was the Bureau's arrest of the controversial and unpopular (within white America, that is) black heavyweight boxing champion Jack Johnson, who had brought his white mistress across a state line to live with him in Chicago. The case earned the Bureau headlines and acclaim, but it is hard to argue that it struck much of a blow against the politically protected prostitution rackets that were the intended target of the Mann Act.

World War I moved the Bureau into the undeniably vital area of national security, hunting down spies and saboteurs. In view of the Bureau's perpetual battles with the CIA and other agencies (friction that contributed to its 9/11 failures), it is worth noting that the Bureau did not originally seek out this task, but embraced it reluctantly in order to protect its turf from rival agencies—the Treasury Department's Secret Service, and Army and Navy intelligence, all of which wanted a share of the crowd-pleasing business of spy hunting. Unable to find enough real spies or saboteurs to justify the enormous expansion pressed on them by Congress, Bureau agents spent their time harassing antiwar activists—radical members of the Industrial Workers of the World and socialists who opposed the draft—whose offense was less any threat to the war effort than their political unpopularity, particularly among those business leaders who saw the war as an opportunity to paint labor agitators as traitors.

The Bureau got into trouble in 1920 after the Palmer raids

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(led, incidentally, by a young Justice Department attorney named J. Edgar Hoover), in which the Bureau rounded up thousands of aliens who had violated immigration regulations by joining the two just-formed American communist parties. It got into more trouble when it tried to cover up the Teapot Dome scandals of the Harding administration by trying to intimidate administration critics. With many calling for it to be abolished, the Bureau, with Hoover now its director, retreated into the apolitical field of "police professionalism." During the 1920s, Hoover led a movement to popularize scientific crime detection, and he crusaded for the independence of police forces (and the Bureau) by removing them from political control. The Bureau did help bring local law enforcement into the 20th century, but it also, then and forever after, involved itself in endless busy-work helping local law enforcement solve its managerial and technical problems. Then when the FBI was unleashed against the Midwest bank robbers who were winning folk-hero status during the depression, the John Dillinger, Pretty Boy Floyd, and Baby Face Nelson manhunts turned the G-Men and Hoover into national celebrities, and reinforced the FBI's belief that it could do no wrong if it kept exclusively to flashier, lower-level cases.

It wasn't that there was no more important work for the FBI to do. Organized crime was establishing a grip on labor unions, state and municipal governments, and control over entire industries. Senators and congressmen basked in Hoover's assurances that he would never, under any circumstances, investigate them—unless, of course, they criticized the Bureau. Blacks were routinely being brutalized under color of the law in the South. And, during the '30s, the Soviet Union was establishing the espionage networks that would deliver the secrets of the atom bomb to Moscow during World War II. But the FBI kept chasing bank robbers and kidnappers.

Freeh fall

Even in the days of its greatest popularity, the Bureau had its detractors. Ever since the Palmer raids, the left had seethed with hatred toward Hoover and his FBI. But Hoover's Bureau arrogantly assumed that its enemies could always be ignored, that they would be without voice or power. In the wake of Vietnam and Watergate, however, the left found a receptive popular audience for its brief against Hoover and the FBI. And that argument—that the Bureau was the sworn enemy of civil liberties, and had to be defanged and declawed—became something approaching political orthodoxy after the 1975 investigations led by Sen. Frank Church of Idaho.

The FBI's abuses of its power during the later Hoover years had been so outrageous that their disclosure in congressional hearings and the manner in which they were exposed, destroyed the public support on which the FBI's effectiveness had always depended. Americans heard lurid tales of a Bureau that had run political errands for presidents and kept tabs on their political enemies; a Bureau suspected of blackmailing legislators who dared to criticize it; that had pursued a vicious vendetta against Martin Luther King Jr.; and that had waged a secret war to destroy the anti-Vietnam War movement. The Church Committee's final report tied all of these abuses together with what it claimed was an "unexpressed major premise" behind the Bureau's actions: that the FBI had taken upon itself "the duty to do whatever is necessary to combat perceived threats to the existing social and political order." The Church Committee's "unexpressed major premise" theory turned the prosaic record of FBI abuses into an epic of evil, and led many of us to conclude that the Bureau was doing something wrong when it managed to know anything about anybody. In a phrase borrowed from Noam Chomsky's introduction to an exposé of the Bureau, the Church Committee concluded that the Bureau had been waging "a secret war on political freedom."

The public reaction to these revelations caused a deeply damaging shift in the FBI's culture. Though the FBI had repeatedly abused its domestic intelligence investigations, America still needed an agency to gather legitimate domestic intelligence. Someone needed to be keeping an eye on violent groups like the Symbionese Liberation Army and the Weather Underground. But the FBI, after three of its top officials were indicted, and two of them convicted, for authorizing burglaries of the homes of relatives of the Weather Underground, decided that it had taken enough risks for a country that didn't care. Concluding that we simply didn't want the Bureau to be gathering *any* domestic intelligence any more, the FBI became risk-aversive through and through whenever an investigation might possibly step on someone's civil liberties.

Director Clarence Kelley responded to the Church Committee's indictment by taking domestic surveillance from the Intelligence Division of the Bureau and giving it to the Criminal Investigations Division, so all such cases had to be predicated on evidence that a federal crime had been or was on the verge of being committed. Attorney General Edward Levi further hedged domestic intelligence investigations with such rigid guidelines that he signaled to agents that domestic surveillance, while theoretically still possible, was to be regarded as a career-ender. Former Deputy Associate Director Buck Revell wrote in his memoirs that "the Counter-Terrorism Section was effectively neutralized. After all of the removals and censures, we practically had to order people to work on counter terrorism investigations...To work counter terrorism was to become a target for the wildest and cruelest of accusations a law enforcement officer could possibly endure."

So what was a director to do? Having learned the lesson that domestic surveillance would always be denounced as a violation of civil liberties, Director Louis Freeh, who ran the Bureau from 1993-2001, tried to project an image of an organization that was *primarily* dedicated to defending civil liberties, even at the cost of not getting its man. Not only did he insist that "constitutional guarantees are more important than the outcome of any single interview, search for evidence, or investigation," but he also told agents that any Bureau lapses from "the highest ethical standards" could set the FBI on a slippery slope to something resembling the German Holo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

caust—which had begun, Freeh said, "when the law [was] subject to the most horrifying misuse by the police."

Civil liberty for all

So it is unfair to blame the FBI alone for its reluctance during the 1990s to track down al Qaeda. After all, the public was sending the Bureau a message it could interpret only one way. We said that we wanted the FBI to prevent terror attacks, but we were not willing to tolerate any violations of civil liberties to achieve that aim, even though domestic intelligence gathering has always meant getting some dirt underneath your nails. So the FBI, obeying its highly developed instinct for self-preservation, decided that the real message was that no matter what else it does, even if it means doing nothing, don't mess around with anyone's civil liberties. And so when Congress handed it the fight against terror, the Bureau fell back on what it knew was safe, what it was good at, and what had always won it praise in the past. And that was to fight terror through law enforcement, not by gathering intelligence. Instead of stopping terrorists before they hit, it would hunt them down afterwards.

That now seems a woefully inadequate strategy, but at the time it gave the government a way of looking like as if it was doing something about terror, at a time when there was no will to do anything about it militarily. The 2003 Congressional Joint Inquiry into 9/11 noted that "in the absence of a more comprehensive strategy, the United States defaulted to relying on law enforcement, at home and abroad, as the leading instrument in the fight against al-Qa'ida." Instead of sending in the Marines, "the perpetrators of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the plot against New York City landmarks, several conspirators in the 1998 embassy bombings, and several members that planned Millennium attacks were all prosecuted." Some FBI agents thought this policy was ridiculous, that no law-enforcement agency was going to be effective against a quasi-military threat like al Qaeda. The counterterror instructions, one gruff agent told the Congressional Joint Inquiry into 9/11, were "like telling the FBI after Pearl Harbor to go to Tokyo and arrest the emperor."

The Bureau's personnel does not take naturally to the tedious minutiae of gathering and analyzing intelligence on terrorist organizations—translation, satellite photo analysis, chatting up friendly imams in Buffalo. After all, the G in G-Men is not supposed to stand for "geek." FBI agents are cops at heart: They typically majored in criminal justice, worked as local police officers for a few years, took as many fingerprinting and gang tactics courses as they could, and applied to the Bureau because they thought it was the best law enforcement agency in the world. And when you look at them, they embody a muscular approach to problem solving. You simply can't find a more imposing bunch of bicep-bulging physical specimens anywhere else in the country—with the possible exception of maximum-security prisons.

But the FBI is certainly capable of using its brains as well as its brawn. When the Bureau has felt assured that the public will support it if it unleashes its formidable capabilities against networks of criminals or terrorists, the results have been remarkable.

The FBI campaign against the militias during the 1990s is a case in point. Now, after September 11, the threat of the rural militias can seem almost quaint—camouflaged gun collectors marching around their chicken coops muttering darkly about U.N. helicopters. But a decade ago, these violence-prone private armies represented a significant threat to public safety (and to local governments, since they were usually refusing to pay taxes). Then there were the individual right-wing extremists who bombed the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995, killing more than 300 people, the worst act of terrorism committed in this country to that date; dozens of bombings at abortion clinics around the country throughout the '90s; the Centennial Park bombing at the Atlanta Olympics in 1996; and the deadly standoffs with weapons-stockpiling militants at Ruby Ridge and Waco. And after a bloody series of blunders, the Bureau developed a cerebral approach to dealing with such extremism, a sophisticated blend of intelligence gathering and patient sieges, as at Jordan, Mont., that showed it could defuse dangerous threats with minimum bloodshed.

But the FBI was able to succeed in these missions because it had political support. The Bureau learned that even if it made mistakes, as it did most flamboyantly at Ruby Ridge and Waco, the public, and more importantly its traditional liberal critics, would not take those fiascos as a reason to terminate the campaign against the violent right. Those who most objected to the anti-militia campaign were conservative Republicans who could be counted on to come back to the FBI fold in the end, while Democrats saw the Bureau's campaign as furthering the cause of gun control and advancing the political strategy of linking the Republican right to terrorist extremism.

Another example of the FBI's ability to investigate and destroy entire criminal enterprises was its success against the Mafia in the 1980s, when a patient 10-year-long investigation involving undercover agents, a web of informants and tens of thousands of hours of wiretaps resulted in the virtual destruction of a criminal organization that for most of a century had been so impervious to law enforcement that it could, and often did, get away with murder. Why was the FBI able to move so effectively against the Mafia in the 1980s after being unable—and unwilling—take on the mob throughout its history? Not until that decade could the Bureau feel completely sure that its political superiors would really back, the FBI if it investigated the mafia—a crucial assurance since the mob had sunk deep roots not only in the labor unions (important constituents of local and national politicians), but it in some places such as New York, it even controlled city and state political machines. The Bureau had never known when political pressure would ease off on the mob, or whether should it be caught cutting constitutional corners in its investigations, it would be hung out to dry. The Bureau got a clear public message when it was, in the mid-'70s, armed with legal authority to employ court supervised wiretaps—it had been forbidden to wiretap at all until 1968, and before that, the results were considered illegal searches and could not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be used in court. The new regulation, combined with Congress' passage of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act of 1970 (RICO) let the Bureau convict mob bosses for the crimes of their underlings. And so the Bureau finally went to war with the Mafia; after 10 years of hard work, the convictions started rolling in.

But when al Qaeda began to emerge as a threat, the FBI had long since decided that unless it had an express public mandate, it was not going to risk investigating political or religious groups that had not yet broken the law. It had gotten burned too badly, for instance, when it looked into American groups supporting the cause of guerrilla insurgencies in Central America. Unfortunately, the American public only became serious about the al Qaeda threat after 9/11 (if indeed, we are serious even now—recurrent outcries about FBI efforts to gather information on Moslem communities make you wonder). During those years when it might have been doing something about Islamic terror cells in America, the Bureau felt it had less to fear from al Qaeda than from those of us who were always looking for a chance to bash the Bureau.

And so rather than launch an investigation of the entire enterprise of Islamic terror, the Bureau treated the first attacks as simple matters of law enforcement, tracking down and capturing those who had committed terror attacks on Americans at home or abroad. In these investigations, it proved itself capable of the most remarkable feats of long distance law enforcement, going to the Afghan-Pakistani border, for example, to "render" Mir Aimal Kansi, who had shot up CIA headquarters in Langley, Va., in 1993, back to America where he was tried and executed.

Instead of applying the lessons learned in its organized-crime investigations, during which it had used an "enterprise" approach to bring down entire criminal organizations, or in counterespionage, where it patiently worked to roll up entire espionage rings, the Bureau insisted on treating terror attacks as simple acts of murder. Instead of building a case against all of al Qaeda that might have made early military intervention against bin Laden's safe haven in Afghanistan palatable to the public before 9/11, the Bureau was content to convict individual terrorists, paring down its cases into forceful courtroom presentation with no loose ends like a conspiratorial mastermind named bin Laden whose absence might have confused a jury.

Patriot axe

The current debate over what to do with the FBI has gotten caught up in two simple but incomplete questions. The first is how much extra statutory power the Bureau needs to fight terrorism. But the plain fact is that had the FBI been willing to exercise all of its existing authority, it would not have needed any new laws. The Bureau did not really need the Patriot Act to fight the war on terror, except as a signal that it now had a go-ahead for the domestic intelligence investigations it should have been carrying out all along.

For the Bureau, the key provisions of the Patriot Act were a restatement of the requirements for a search warrant from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) court, and clarification of when the FBI could share information from intelligence and criminal investigations with other intelligence agencies when the case file included grand jury testimony. These are worthy initiatives, and if followed they will have the effect of eliminating the notorious "walls" between intelligence agencies of which the 9/11 Commission has rightly been so critical. But neither of these provisions breaks new legal ground: Functionally, they are merely reminders that the FBI ought to be taking advantage of authority it had already been granted. They are a prod, a legislative attempt to get the Bureau back on the ball.

Beyond those two provisions, the rest of the Patriot Act has been counterproductive. Giving the Bureau authority to demand library borrowers' records, or bank clients' records without court order (the latter authority was recently overturned by a federal court) were not needed, and have not proved especially useful. Worse, these provisions waved a red flag in front of what is now an aggressive civil-liberties industry that lives for just those kinds of confrontations. Attorney General John Ashcroft and the Bush administration managed to turn a consensus in favor of a sensible domestic surveillance policy after 9/11, which should have unified the country behind the Bureau, into a divisive wedge issue. The only possible motive for such overreach was a political strategy of provoking opposition in order to paint opponents as enemies of the war on terror. By weakening the public support for the FBI's gathering domestic intelligence, the Patriot Act set back the Bureau's drive against terror.

In addition to the argument over the Patriot Act, Congress and the two presidential candidates are now immersed in a debate over whether the FBI is capable of performing both law enforcement and intelligence tasks, or whether the nation's domestic intelligence capabilities should be cleaved off into a new agency. Those who have argued that the functions are mutually incompatible have said that the FBI has tended to get impatient with longer, intelligence style investigations. They have also pointed to the experience of MI5, which has had success in recruiting moderate Muslims as spies that its supporters say is only possible because an MI5 investigation did not carry with it the threat of arrest. That may well be, but the law abiding members of a community are not likely to know many terrorists or what they are up to. Good people know good people, and bad people know bad people, and the FBI's law officer status is essential to turning bad guys into informants.

Moreover, as Mueller has argued, an effective campaign against terror requires comprehensive cooperation between local, state, and foreign law enforcement and intelligence agencies, as well as with the public. The FBI has built decades of relationships at all these levels. Its field offices and resident agencies have always had to maintain liaison with local and state authorities, as well as with district and United States attorneys. These relationships cannot be readily duplicated by a new agency, since they are based not on a few cold calls or letters of introduction but on a history of cooperatively solving cases, resolving mutual problems, and rendering mutual assistance.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Breaking up the FBI would also deprive the country of one of its most effective weapons against terror, because the Bureau, for all its faults, is a great institution, and such greatness is not achieved overnight. To destroy it—and taking away its most important mission would certainly destroy it, depriving it of its ability to attract the best talent and inspire the level of achievement that comes within an elite institution—would be folly. The Bureau's ability to attract the best rests on the fact that it gets the best work, and so when there is important work to be done, the Bureau gets the job. And so the 9/11 Commission has wisely approved Mueller's reforms and affirmed that the FBI can effectively fight both law enforcement and terrorism.

And in reality, the fundamental problem with the FBI was not that it couldn't handle intelligence, but that it routinely declined to handle the most difficult and politically delicate cases, because by the 1990s its reading of public opinion, Congress, and the media was that the country simply did not want it to do domestic intelligence. Without an adequate level of political and public support, no new MI5 would be able to do any better. The FBI's current focus on terror proves that it is willing to assume, until proven wrong, that there does now exist public support for gathering intelligence on potentially dangerous groups and individuals who might commit terror attacks.

But even if we have convinced the FBI that terror is not a politically risky area for it to tackle, that doesn't mean that we have cured the Bureau of its long-time disinclination to do politically unpopular work. If we could, we might direct them to the kind of work no one else can do, rooting out political corruption or, more urgently, combating corporate crime. Over the past two decades, the American economy has been staggered by multi-billion-dollar frauds —most notably, the Savings & Loan scandals of the 1980s and Enron-type scandals of recent years. When the FBI tried to investigate the S&L scandals, it found its way blocked by the corporate criminals' influence in the Senate. And even after that S&L scandal, the FBI was rebuffed when it appealed for more funds to support investigations of the banking industry. The political influence of big money has certainly not been diminished: Famously, Enron's chairman Ken Lay was one of President Bush's largest contributors. The swindles of the S&Ls and Enron did not evolve entirely in the dark; in each case, regulators suspected something fishy was going on. But they didn't have the expertise in or powers of surveillance and wiretap to get inside executive suites and discover what was really going on. The FBI does. But if we want these kinds of investigations conducted, Congress will have to send a clear message that we want the Bureau to root out corporate crime; otherwise, the FBI will consider this a politically touchy area and steer clear. Beyond terrorism, it is hard to imagine a more worthy target for the Bureau; the S&L frauds alone cost taxpayers more than all the bank robberies in history, combined.

The incredible shrinking agency

There is one more reason why the Bureau did not rouse itself more fully against the threat of Islamic terror in the 1990s: The FBI may have become too big. The Bureau's staff averaged roughly 11,000 agents throughout the 1990s, working on a sprawling array of law enforcement programs, unable to sort out its missions, and with managers intent on protecting their staffing and turf. The FBI was tracking down bank robbers, profiling serial criminals, surfing the Internet for pedophiles, rounding up street gangs, and policing Indian reservations—all of which ate up manpower. And the most innovative divisions—which because of their nature do not return quantifiable results—tended to be sacrificed to keep the routine grinding along. There was so much work to be done in the lower reaches of law enforcement that there were never enough resources for the fight against terror, and these were lent only grudgingly—and then withdrawn as soon as Congress stopped watching.

The current FBI is so large that it cannot be wholly occupied by its most important missions: There simply aren't enough terrorists to fight. And experience teaches that if the Bureau can expend its resources on routine police work, it will. A Bureau-wide mission creep will set in, steadily stripping agents from the tasks that don't bring quick results and might bring criticism and dispatching them to cases with quicker payoffs in publicity and convictions.

The solution may be to pare down the FBI's size and mission, forcing it to do the important things it doesn't want to do by taking away those (comparatively trivial) responsibilities that have been a refuge from criticism when times are tough for the Bureau. The FBI should focus only on those highest level "crimes against the United States" that were its original mission, investigations that no other can conduct, and at which, as former Deputy Director Bear Bryant put it, if it fails, the nation will fall. The FBI needs to work almost exclusively on preventing terrorist attacks, rooting out political corruption, catching spies, and fighting corporate crime and criminal organizations—those difficult, complicated, patient investigations which are essential for our national security.

We have to remember that, as the FBI becomes an intelligence agency, it must still be a police force, or else political corruption and Enron-level corporate crimes will go unwatched, undeterred, and unpunished. Justice Department statistics from October suggest not enough has changed: The Bureau still devotes too many resources to routine police work like bank robberies, so that despite its large, perhaps bloated size, it never seems to have enough resources for top-level investigations, not against only terror, but also in politically sensitive but vital areas like massive corporate fraud or government corruption.

But in the end, the FBI can't be expected to protect a country that doesn't want to be protected. For at least a quarter century, every signal we have sent to the FBI was that we did not want to be protected, and we punished it whenever it tried. We told the FBI what we wanted it to be—an FBI that never violated anybody's civil liberties, even if it was not doing anything else. In the end, we got the FBI that we wanted. Well, the FBI is showing us that it wants to change. But do we? ◆

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Grill Seeker

How George Foreman, Ted Nugent, and Bobby Flay taught me to be a real suburban man.

By Joshua Green

One of the false promises of adulthood is that once you grow up, all the competitive torments of adolescence will magically disappear. As someone who has only recently done that (hitting the adult trifecta of a new job, new wife, and new house), I have discovered that's not the case; in fact, the assorted humiliations I remember so vividly from my teenage years have suddenly reemerged, only in slightly different form.

Let me give you an example. One evening not long ago I stood on my patio, flip-flopped and contentedly sipped a beer in the manner I imagine common to suburban men, pausing occasionally to wipe my brow as I tended earnestly to the brats on my hulking Char-Broil gas grill. The newly initiated male homeowner in my neighborhood quickly comes to understand that despite whatever life has taught them status really revolves around only three things: home improvement, lawn care, and barbecuing. The pressure is such that I found myself reading David Brooks's latest book not for his humorous dissection of suburbanites but as *Cliffs Notes* from which I might pick up brand recommendations.

As a longtime apartment-dweller, I hadn't initially understood that the queer looks I received shortly after moving into my house were due to the nearly waist-high grass that, it turns out, rapidly appears when there is no superintendent to care for it. But I'd quickly fallen in line, and after a single pass from my fearsome, all-terrain Craftsman mower, I was beaming at my freshly manicured expanse of lawn when he first caught my eye: There, in the corner of the yard, was an enormous raccoon. And he was digging furiously. *In my lawn!*

Only later did I pause to reflect on how quickly and deeply feelings of pride and homeownership had taken root and sparked my vendetta against this mortal enemy. At the time, confronted by an adversary, my fight-or-flight instincts took hold, and I simply reached for the nearest weapon at hand, a garden trowel (a very *expensive* garden trowel, I later found out), which I hurled at the invader like it was a ninja throwing star. The trowel sailed harmlessly past him, though it removed a sizeable chunk from the fence. As I stood there, impotently shaking my fist and cursing the damage to my lawn, it dawned on me how quickly I was shuttling along life's continuum from Dennis the Menace to Mr. Wilson.

Meat up

I take a measure of comfort in knowing that difficulties like mine aren't all that uncommon—they *can't* be, or there wouldn't exist such a sizeable body of literature aimed at improving the ambitious suburban male. For while, as a species, we project an image of being kings of our castle, eager to show off the recently landscaped yard or hold forth to visitors on the merits of various deck sealants, such knowledge and skill are acquired only under the constant threat of humiliation.

Take my initial foray into grilling. Owing only partly to the diplomatic exchange with the raccoon, my first attempt yielded brats that were somehow totally charred on the outside yet still raw on the inside, a sort of double whammy of unappetizing cooking. Chastened, I decided to sample a number of recently published books on the art of grilling. Like high school, adulthood requires that you declare your allegiance to a group, and deciding what kind of a grill cook you'd like to be is a lot like choosing which lunch table you're going to sit at. My lunchroom choices included jocks, student council geeks, and stoners; the grilling books I picked up broke down along roughly these same lines.

George Foreman's *Knock-Out-the-Fat Barbecue and Grilling Cookbook* seemed like a good bet since, having

Joshua Green is a senior editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* and a contributing editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been written by a jock, it looked unthreateningly straightforward and brought back memories of the George Foreman grill that had been a mainstay of my old apartment kitchen. Alas, I didn't notice that the book is co-authored by a nutritionist or that George explains in the preface that "my eating habits have changed significantly over the years"—a bad omen grimly justified by his making clear that he no longer cares for the delectable burgers his signature-brand grill was so good at preparing. "Today," he writes, "I understand the value of a diet that's low in fat and includes plenty of vegetables."

I'm sad to report that Foreman's book has a wussified element to it that, while not incongruous with the life of the recent suburban transplant, significantly diminishes the appeal of these recipes. There are chapters on marinades, dry rubs, barbecue sauces, burgers and sandwiches, and beef. But look closely and each has been watered down, debased, or corrupted. The recipe for Lyndon B. Johnson's own Texas barbecue sauce, for example, turns out not to be the real thing but a thin, "heart-healthy" knockoff. And burger recipes like the promising-sounding George's Powerburger reveal themselves to be lightweights, the lean ground beef cut with such atrocities as bread crumbs, oat bran, and even something called TVP ("textured vegetable protein") to shield us from calories.

None of these recipes sounded remotely appetizing enough to attempt, so I decided instead that my long-term enjoyment of grilling would be better served by ridding myself of the troublesome raccoon, who now appeared every evening at twilight to carry out his own vision of landscape gardening right across most of the flower beds. Before turning to my next cookbook, I headed to Home Depot and learned that areas like the one I live in—which bans such commonsense solutions as simply shooting the raccoon—present only two choices for the besieged homeowner. I opted first for the most humane choice, a Havahart steel cage trap whose packaging proclaimed it suitable for "raccoons and small dogs." This label puzzled me, but I went ahead and bought the trap figuring that after I'd captured the raccoon I could keep it in the garage in case the yard was suddenly overrun with Shih Tzus. Per instructions, I baited the trap with bacon and peanut butter and spent the next several evenings in a seated vigil on the back porch, waiting to hear the sharp snap of the spring-loaded door as I passed the time flipping through cookbooks.

Next in my stack of books was *Bobby Flay's Boy Gets Grill*, which looked fussy and remarkably complicated for someone who has struggled grilling brats, and the author himself looked suspiciously like a grinning ex-student-council weenie. The recipes sounded as if they'd be too much of a chore to shop for, let alone to prepare. Take, for example, Smoky-Sweet Rotisserie Apricot-Chipotle-Glazed Lamb Tacos with Goat Cheese and Salsa Cruda—suitable for some wimpy Napa Valley vintner perhaps, but not for me.

Art by Fred Harper

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Surprisingly, though, *Boy Gets Grill* is superb (and not just for grilling) when one adheres to the simple rule of ignoring any recipe with more than six words in the title. This led to my discovery of the delicious Extra-Spicy Bloody Marys, an excellent Sour Cream Salsa dip for football season, and the Pressed, Cuban-Style Burger, among many other treats. While a good deal of the book is given over to recipes I'd never attempt—clams, quail, Cornish hens—special sections on fish tacos, burgers, and skewers make this an invaluable resource for the pest-free grilling enthusiast.

Sadly, that did not describe me. Early one morning, groggy-eyed and longing for coffee, I was shuffling into the kitchen when a sudden movement caught my eye through the window. There, behind what remained of the flower beds, sat the steel trap—and this morning, unlike previous mornings, it contained something large and furry. I bolted out to the garage to don protective gloves and confront my nemesis at last. Only it turned out not to be a raccoon but a large, white possum who looked up expectantly, as if hoping I had brought some more bacon. With a sigh, I bent down, pried open the door, and jiggled the cage to free him. The imposter didn't budge. I grabbed one end and turned the cage practically upside down. The possum simply grabbed hold of the steel wiring with his claws and stayed put. I gave up, figuring he'd soon wander off. But when I returned that afternoon he was still there, curled up and snoozing in his new home, and probably dreaming of bacon.

Meanwhile, the quadruped lawn terrorist laying siege to my homestead ratcheted up his attacks. He began using the window wells to our basement as his personal litter box. By this point, I had spent long hours in fruitless pursuit of him, my humiliation capped by the realization that my life now mirrored that of a character in a favorite movie I'd watched dozens of times as a smartass teenager: I had become Carl Spackler, the muttering groundskeeper of *Caddyshack*, played by Bill Murray, who ultimately turns to plastic explosives in an apocalyptic struggle to save his fairways

Returning to Home Depot, I ultimately resorted to an altogether different mode of warfare: powdered coyote urine, which the clerk assured me was the plastic explosive of raccoon removal. I returned home, checked to make sure I was standing upwind, and began to powder the lawn, fence, bushes, window wells, and anything else within shaking distance. The irony of this was painful because—let's be honest here—until not all that long ago, I was much likelier to be found urinating on someone else's lawn at two in the morning than spreading someone else's urine on my own lawn at two on a Sunday afternoon.

The authors of my final cookbook, Ted and Shemane Nugent, would have no trouble dispatching a raccoon or figuring out what to do with it afterward. The '70s rock-star-turned-gun-enthusiast and his wife have written *Kill It & Grill It: A Guide to Preparing and Cooking Wild Game and Fish*. The book features recipes for deer, elk, wild boar, rabbit, bear, and other wildlife. But it was Ted's chapter-opening stories of hunting animals with a bow and arrow—or an AK-47—for which I suddenly developed the greatest appreciation. With my grilling possibilities sharply curtailed due to the powdered lawn and a related fear of a sudden stiff breeze—not to mention the paucity of wild boar and elk grazing in the Greater Beltway area—I can't attest to Nugent's claim that "wild game meat has no equal." (His assurance that it is high-protein, no-fat, and low in cholesterol, however, led me to consider sending a note to George Foreman.) But I can say that "Chef Nuge" and his recipes are refreshingly simple and easy to follow, each just a slight variation on his motto: "Kill legal game. Add fire. Devour."

How useful these recipes prove in practice depends a great deal on one's degree of culinary adventurousness and the strength of one's gag reflex. There is Sweet 'n' Sour Antelope, Squirrel Casserole, Bar-B-Q Black Bear, and Coca-Cola Stew (the acid in Coca-Cola softens and sweetens wild game meat, Nuge reports), as well as milder fare like Quail Roast, Pumpkin Goulash, and even Mom's Blintzes. It should be said on their behalf that aside from exotic game, most of the Nugents' ingredients tend to be found in any kitchen. My lone foray into Nugent-style cooking was an aborted attempt at Stuffed, Rolled Venison Log, for which I proposed to swap ground beef for venison before my wife intervened.

The big hunt

Not long afterward, with summer drawing to a close, I was in the basement when a shuffling noise drew my gaze upward to the small window above my head, where the large, striped posterior of a raccoon was settling in to make itself comfortable. Racing upstairs, I grabbed a carving knife from the kitchen and bolted out into the middle of the yard, aiming to cut off the raccoon's usual path of escape through the flower bed. As I burst through the door, I was so filled with rage that I emitted some vague, nonsensical shriek that must have alerted my foe to impending danger, for when I got out of the house, he had already climbed up along the fence where he now stood staring down at me. I charged, chasing him along the fence, through the flowers, and crashed through the holly bush as he waddled along only to disappear into the neighbor's yard as I drew near. I stood there burning with humiliation—especially my eyes, which, it occurred to me a moment later, were also burning with powdered coyote urine.

Eventually, the raccoon stopped showing up. My wife believes his assaults on the yard were not directed at me personally, but that he was merely digging for the cicadas that emerged from the mid-Atlantic soil this year as they do every 17 years. My friends gleefully insist that it *was* personal and that the raccoon simply tired of tormenting me and sought out a worthier foe. My hunch is that his appearance is a seasonal thing, and that he'll be back again next spring. As it happens, I've finally mastered the art of grilling brats and decided that that's really all I need to know about cooking (tip: boil them in beer first). But prompted by Chef Nuge, I have directed my energy to a new hobby, legal in my neighborhood and at which I aim to be proficient by next summer: bow-hunting. ◆

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

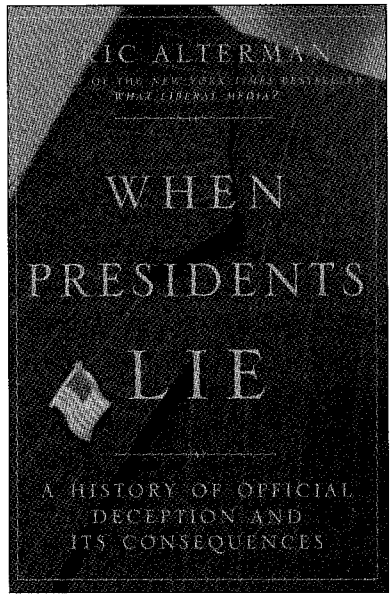
The Post-Truth Presidency

The unintended consequences of presidential lying.

By John W. Dean

May 22, 1973, loomed large in my life, and although most Americans may not realize it, helped determine the fate of a presidency. For weeks beforehand, rumors had circulated through official Washington that Richard Nixon was going to come clean about the Watergate cover-up. Nixon had already asked for and accepted not only my resignation, but also that of his chief of staff, Bob Haldeman, his top domestic affairs adviser, John Ehrlichman, and his attorney general, Richard Kleindienst—all in an effort to contain the fallout. The Senate's Watergate investigation was just getting under way. So, when Nixon announced that he would be putting out a statement, Hays Gorey of *Time* magazine asked if I would meet with him privately, and off the record, when the much-anticipated statement was finally released. On that day in May, Gorey and I met at a mutual friend's apartment not far from the White House. I hoped, both for Nixon's sake and for the nation's, that he was actually going to tell the truth.

It was a lengthy statement. The president opened it with seven "categorical" declarations about his own role in Watergate; he claimed to be unequivocally explaining what he knew and when he knew it. I read the declarations carefully and was truly stunned. At that moment, I knew that Richard Nixon had sealed his fate: Six of the seven disclaimers were flat-out lies, lies that—as I told Gorey at the time—would haunt Nixon forever. My first reading of the president's falsehoods left a knot in the pit of my stomach. Even at that late stage, and not withstanding his increasing attacks on me, I wanted to believe he would do the right thing. After all, he was the president of the United States. But he didn't, and the rest, as they say, is history. Even before the secret tapes surfaced, there were any number of ways Nixon could have been proven a liar, and when the so-called "smoking-gun" tape of the June 23, 1972, conversation with Bob Haldeman surfaced, two of his deceptions were demolished: His claim that he had not been involved in covering up anything, and his argument that he had no involvement whatsoever in implicating the CIA in the Watergate matter. Nixon had mounted his defense on lies when the truth might have saved his presidency.



When Presidents Lie: A History of Official Deception and Its Consequences
By Eric Alterman
Viking Books, $27.95

Eric Alterman's new book, *When Presidents Lie: A History of Official Deception and Its Consequences*, shows that Nixon is no exception when it comes to presidential untruthfulness. Alterman is interested specifically in lies pertaining to the conduct of foreign policy and focuses his study on four presidents: Franklin Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Ronald Reagan. (Nixon is excluded, Alterman explains, because the consequences of his deceptions have already been exhaustively examined. So are Bill Clinton's, although Alterman acknowledges that Clinton's Monica-related deceptions are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"the best publicized of presidential lying in recent times.") In working my way through Alterman's study, I noted how helpful *When Presidents Lie* would be for anyone who seeks to work in, or around, the Oval Office. This book is essential reading not only for insiders but for outsiders as well because it makes a strong case that the end result of major deceptions is almost always negative and always unpredictable. In addition, this is an astute study of presidential decision-making—if lying instead of telling the truth can be so dignified—along with critical examination of the news media's unfortunate but recurring role in facilitating presidential lying.

Implausible deniability

The first half of the book, an adaptation of Alterman's Stanford doctoral dissertation, examines the presidential mendacity in Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy. Alterman shows how FDR lied to Congress and even to his closest aides about a number of off-the-record agreements he had made with Soviet premier Joseph Stalin at Yalta.

At the time, the president was not certain the atomic bomb—then being developed in secret—would work, and he felt he might need the Russians to help conclude the war against Japan. Roosevelt also wanted Stalin to cooperate with his efforts to create the United Nations, accomplishing what Woodrow Wilson had failed to do with the League of Nations. Stalin, whose troops were in Poland and Eastern Europe, wanted to keep what his army had won. Accordingly, Roosevelt and Stalin concluded several agreements—among them Roosevelt's acceptance of ongoing Soviet dominance of Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe—which were known to only a very few people, and never fully reported to the American public.

Similarly, Kennedy, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, agreed to remove American missiles from Turkey, while pretending he had averted a confrontation with the Russians by standing firm.

The book's second half covers the presidencies of Lyndon B. Johnson, whose administration's exaggerations and distortion of the Gulf of Tonkin incident precipitated formal American involvement in Vietnam, and Ronald Reagan, whose administration dissembled about the atrocities committed by Contras in Nicaragua as well as about the program devised by the White House to fund them with proceeds from illegal arms sales to Iran.

Drawing on both archival research and his own previously published books and articles, Alterman sets out to untangle the webs woven by presidents whose practice was to deceive. But he's not interested in passing moral judgments. Rather, he approaches his subjects as a social scientist, examining the reverberations of presidential deception much as a computer scientist might probe the problems caused by a hacker's virus. All of the presidents in question, Alterman writes, "believed themselves to be acting on the basis of patriotic necessity when deceiving the nation." Roosevelt thought he was "preserving the postwar peace"; Kennedy felt his lies were were necessary to prevent war with the Soviets; Johnson believed his dishonesty would prevent the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia; and Reagan held similar beliefs about Central America.

But presidential deceptions tend to have unintended consequences that fall on not only the liar but also his successors. Harry Truman inherited the hidden costs of Roosevelt's lies at Yalta. The agreement fell into disrepute during the postwar period, making the Democrats look like appeasers of Stalin, adding fuel to the fire of McCarthyism, and compelling Truman to take a hard line on Korea. Similarly, Kennedy's fabrications helped force Johnson's hand in Vietnam. If Kennedy had acknowledged his secret compromise with the Soviets regarding their missiles in Cuba, Johnson might not have felt the country's credibility was on the line when he was deciding whether to escalate American involvement in Southeast Asia. The necessity of going to war in Vietnam, and the further necessity to deceive the public about the consequences, destroyed Johnson's presidency and squandered his legacy. "The more a leader lies to his people, the more he *must* lie to his people," Alterman writes. "Eventually the lies take on a life of their own and tend to overpower the liar."

But not every president has been damaged in proportion to his mendacity. Presidents whose policies are deemed broadly successful appear to have escaped lasting damage. Kennedy's reputation for foreign-policy toughness remains intact. "Convulsive" lying by Ronald Reagan (who claimed he knew nothing of the Iran-Contra arrangement) and his vice president George H. W. Bush (ditto) certainly had negative consequences. Reagan was portrayed as exhibiting a slightly senile ignorance of what his own aides were up to. (Alterman is not certain if Reagan's lies derived from conscious dishonesty or mental decline; as a result, he comes down much harder on Reagan's senior aides than on the former president since these aides have no excuses.) Bush's claim that he was "out of the loop" came across as patently absurd. But their deceptions seem to have had only short-term consequences.

Currently, Alterman points out, "ex-presidents Reagan and Bush are nationally admired and, to many people, beloved figures, subject to nary a mention of the lies and crimes described in detail"—perhaps because the Cold War ended on U.S. terms, granting Reagan and Bush a kind of historical pardon. Ironically, "ex-President Jimmy Carter, who earned a reputation for being painfully honest in public life, enjoys no such cachet in the media or insider political establishment."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Today, Alterman concludes, we accept more mendacity from our presidents than ever: What Alterman calls the "post-truth presidency" is exemplified by George W. Bush, who "has appeared remarkably unconcerned with the question of whether he even appeared to be speaking truthfully."

None of these lying presidents, of course, could have succeeded without an accommodating press corps. Take the media's reporting on the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which Johnson used to obtain congressional authority to go to war in Vietnam, and which was based almost entirely on information and details spoon-fed by top officials of the government. *Time* magazine dramatized this incident (that, in fact, never occurred) down to the smallest details: "Russian-designed 'Swatow' gun boats armed with 37-mm and 28-mm guns...opened fire on the [American] destroyers with automatic weapons, this time from as close as 2,000 yards." Similarly, *Newsweek*'s creative writers described a non-existent North Vietnamese "PT boat burst[ing] into flames" and other boats that were never there sinking or scurrying into the shadows nursing their wounds. *The New York Times* likewise provided a minute-by-minute account.

There are, of course, some similarities between Johnson's tenure and Bush's post-truth administration. Both presidents enjoyed a docile press early in their terms, and a more inquisitive one later on. In the immediate aftermath of the Iraq war, Alterman notes, some of America's most influential voices on foreign affairs, like Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times* and the editorial page of *The Washington Post*, aided Bush by brushing off evidence that the president had lied about weapons of mass destruction. Weapons or no, Friedman wrote in 2003, Bush had at least eliminated "a huge human engine of mass destruction." The *Post* concurred, writing that same year that whether

or not the president turned out to have made false claims, his beliefs about Iraq's programs "reflected a broad international consensus," an odd assertion given the many credible stories that had appeared in that paper's news pages questioning White House claims even as they were made.

Both Friedman and the *Post* have, of course, gotten more critical in the months since. But most mainstream news organizations—even when confronted with overwhelming evidence of a sitting president's dishonesty—have become incapable of writing the simple words, "the president lied."

So, why should a president bother to be truthful? Americans can "no longer depend on the press—its powers and responsibilities enshrined in the First Amendment—to keep [their presidents] honest," Alterman laments. He only speculates why this is the case: reporters' deference to the high office, their belief that Americans will not tolerate a reporter labeling a president a liar, the insular nature of Washington culture, or the reality that some journalists are ideologically disinclined to challenge the lies in question.

Other than in a few passing references, however, Alterman withholds an explanation of *why* presidents lie until his concluding chapter. There he looks briefly at the thinking of neoconservatives, and the canon of political philosopher Leo Strauss, who believed in the Platonic noble lie. But Alterman eventually rejects any such high-minded justification for presidential lying, concluding instead that "presidents lie largely for reasons of political convenience," which he ties to "a fundamental contradiction at the heart of the practice of American democracy."

For Alterman, of all the lies a president may make, none are less unforgivable than those "relating to matters of war and peace," the "most sacred and demanding of presidential duties...where the presidential words carry the greatest power." He explains that presidents must play "great power politics" on the world stage, while American citizens do not understand the world in these terms. Stated a little differently, in the real world "deals must be struck and compromises made on behalf of larger purposes," and rather than explain all this to the American people, "presidents tend to prefer deception over education."

Getty Images

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mendacity capacity

There may be some truth to this, but I think Alterman may have attributed a sophistication to presidential lying that simply does not exist. As someone familiar with the underbelly of the beast, so to speak, and who has examined the entrails of many a presidency that preceded and succeeded the one in which I served, I think Alterman had his finger on the explanation when he was finishing his doctoral work. Allow me to quote material from his dissertation material that he chose to use only partially in *When Presidents Lie*:

> [Presidents lie] because they believe the lies they tell serve their narrow political interest on the matter in question. Moreover, US presidents, like so many politicians the world over, have demonstrated a remarkable psychological felicity for confusing their own good fortune with that of the nation's. While appearing to be honest is generally considered better than its opposite, this is hardly the same thing as actually being honest. Hence, truth telling has no independent instrumental value. Hence, if a president believes a lie to be necessary to maintain or improve his political fortunes, the lie is told. The truth is fine too, but if a lie works better, well that is generally considered fine too. As Peter Teeley, press secretary to Vice Presidential candidate George Bush, explained after the 1984 Bush/Ferraro debate, "You can say anything you want during a debate, and 80 million people hear it." If the press then points out an error, "So what? Maybe 200 people read it, or 2,000, or 20,000."

I've never read a better explanation of why presidents lie. Alterman should have stayed with it. I have never read a better explanation of what ensues when presidents do dissemble than *When Presidents Lie*.

John W. Dean was a White House counsel during the Nixon administration and is the author, most recently, of *Worse Than Watergate: The Secret Presidency of George W. Bush*.

Tour of Beauty

A hundred years in the arms race to acquire newer, better weapons of cosmetic enhancement.

By Christina Larson

Since its debut last year, the cosmetic-surgery show "Extreme Makeover" has drawn runaway ratings, its many viewers at once fascinated and appalled by the needles, incisions, and bandages the mostly female participants will endure in order to climb a few notches on the beauty totem pole. This fall, ABC moved its Nielson heavyweight into televisions' kingpin slot, Thursday evenings, while wincing critics sounded an alarm that Americans' fundamental understanding of nature, beauty, and artifice has changed.

Nonsense, darling. In the pursuit of beauty, American women have variously plumped breasts with toilet-plunger-like suction devices (1890s), strapped themselves into fat-roller machines to press away the pounds (1910s), endured "electrode" shock treatment to zap away wrinkles (1920s), worn wire headsets to pull back cheek waddles (1960s), popped "youth" pills, and slathered on anti-cellulite lotions for generations. Today's ladies have no greater drive to become beautiful, and defy the effects of time, than their mothers did. But the technology has sure come a long way.

In *Inventing Beauty: A History of the Innovations That Have Made Us Beautiful*, *New York Times* patent writer Teresa Riordan gives readers a delightful, quirky account of American cosmetic innovations, from lipstick to silicon implants, from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th. She avoids swerving into pro-feminist or anti-feminist polemics, and instead simply accepts that the desire to be fairest-of-them-all is an impulse as mythic and enduring as a fairytale. With a little

Inventing Beauty: A History of the Innovations that Have Made Us Beautiful
By Teresa Riordan
Broadway Books, $17.95

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Advertisement from a 1901 *The Ladies' Field* magazine

Cinderella-magic of her own, Riordan transforms patent history into an almost titillating subject, while reminding readers that tanning creams, breast implants, and nail polishes are "not merely articles of fashion but legitimate inventions"—and serious business.

A skilled hostess, Riordan sees the "emotional landmines" she's tiptoeing around. To ease progressive minds, she suggests that lipstick, hair dye, and Wonderbras may in fact be a force for some social good—helping women born with lesser physical endowments make up for nature's neglect through a combination of cunning, creativity, and financial investment: "When successful, the artifice of beauty is a great leveler." That's true, if you're talking about evening the playing field *among women*. But let's not be uncivil—it's well worth setting aside ideology long enough to enjoy her splendid romp through the dusty attic of the Patent Office archives. Before the push-up bra appeared in anyone's closet, someone had to invent, patent, and perfect it. And Riordan's strictly-business eye on the beauty industry inevitably turns up ample grist for other debates.

In the century covered by her research, for instance, she found that only 1 percent of all patents were awarded to women. But in the field of "breast enhancers"—that is, cushions and contraptions that allow a lady to look bustier under her sweater than she does in the shower—nearly two thirds of the patent holders were women. Does this suggest that women, not men, have historically enforced the standards of female beauty? Or that more than a few businesswomen will take advantage of their sisters' insecurities? The question at least might bring a blush to third-wave feminists fond of placing *all* the blame for the objectification of women's upper half on husbands, *Hustler*, and Hooters.

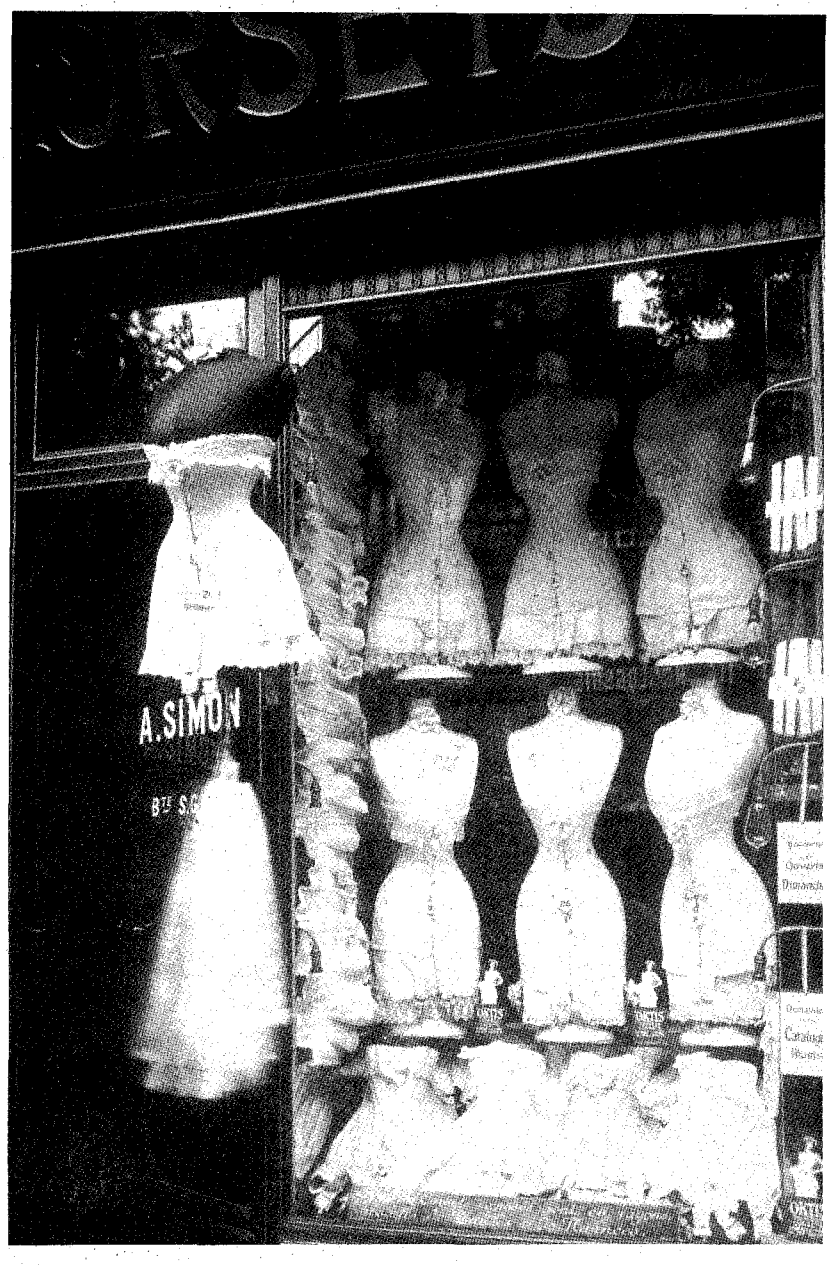
It turns out that the patent history of human beauty products resembles that of natural selection. Once a new species emerges, variations flourish, until one version with a clear competitive advantage triumphs. In the first half of the century, women fumbled with myriad products to darken their eyelashes—patented tongs to apply cake powders, tweezers to paint on commercial creams, miniature combs to brush in tinted jellies—but once mascara wands took off in the 1950s, no woman or inventor cast a painted eye backward.

Not only does the beauty industry drive invention, but new technology can also push the limits of what is possible, and therefore potentially beautiful. Riordan recounts early 20th century patent applicants' vexing experiments with shapes, materials, and suspension systems for supporting and shaping the female chest—pointed rubber harnesses, flattening wrap-around bandage bras, and horizontal straps that buckled into garters at the waist. In 1931, a mini-manufacturing revolution took place when a new blend of elastic and cotton fibers allowed suppliers to create stretchy and washable bras, which pumped life into a dismal Depression-era undergarments industry. With better materials and a growing market, bra retailers soon developed the standardized cup-system of A, B, C, and D sizes. If you've ever puzzled over the disappearance of fashionable silhouettes of previous decades—the bunker-chested Gibson Girl of the 1910s, the boyish flapper girl of the 1920s—remember those styles peaked before the invention of bra cups for suspending each breast individually made the idea of both a bosom (singular) and a flat chest obsolete.

New technologies have also variously enabled or exaggerated existing ideals: In the 19th century, the addition of metal eyelets to the centuries-old corset enabled women to lace them-

Hulton Archive Images

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Hulton Archive Images

selves tighter, and reduce their waistlines to dizzying (and dizzy-spell inducing) proportions. The development of local anesthesia and antibiotics in the 20th century made it possible to reupholster sagging jaw-lines with surgical face-lifts.

The book is arranged by body part, much like a department store; chapters replete with diagrams are devoted to the history of commercial enhancements for eyes, lips, hips, and other attributes. Riordan has drawers full of material to organize, and the book's presentation is highly browsable and entertaining. But there is a drawback to the decision to organize content around erogenous zones. While the eight chapters are individually well-wrought gems, the book's marvelous baubles feel strung together rather loosely. There is scant sense of an overriding historical narrative threading the pieces together. Which is a shame because Riordan does mention, albeit briefly and pages apart, the cultural undercurrents that ultimately washed ashore each of the artifacts she has so carefully collected and described—the rise of consumer culture that put luxury items within the grasp of every woman, the spread of photography and portraiture that allowed women to closely inspect (and agonize over) their own features, the influence of Hollywood screen idols in defining femininity, the ubiquity of television and magazines that ultimately both promoted beauty ideals and hawked cosmetic products from living rooms and coffee tables.

As Riordan relates, Marlene Dietrich drew a line of light powder down the center of her face to create the illusion of a straight nose. She didn't let her asymmetrical features keep her off the silver screen, but neither did her trick spare future women from contemplating rhinoplasty. Though Riordan doesn't belabor the point, her examples frequently show how cosmetic products have allowed women to score higher at the beauty game, but not to change it.

Some may criticize entrepreneurs like Elizabeth Arden—a mid-century Martha Stewart-figure whose rise from beauty-shop assistant to company founder and cosmetic titan Riordan chronicles—for marketing strict standards of beauty and domesticity in order to coerce women into buying frivolous products. Indeed, with a nod to theorist Thorstein Veblen, Riordan coins the term "conspicuous invention" to describe the cosmetic industry's proclivity for continually devising new products and fashions in order to drive sales. On the other hand, both Arden and Stewart did start their own businesses, make millions, and increase the number of women on the *Fortune* 500 list. Riordan's history reminds us that these domestic mavens broke ground for women in the corporate boardroom (ruthlessly at times), if not in their marketing campaigns. Perhaps they didn't change society, but they showed women how to compete within it. This book supplies fresh material for the debate over whether or not that's progress.

Riordan recounts history from an unusual angle and doesn't lace her account with all the reasons women invest more than men do in the creams, and dreams, sold on the Home Shopping Network. But she missed something important: the history of products exploiting male vanity. And what woman, of any ideological stripe, doesn't want to learn more about the male corset, creams for painting bald spots, and patented crotch-stuffers?

Christina Larson is the managing editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

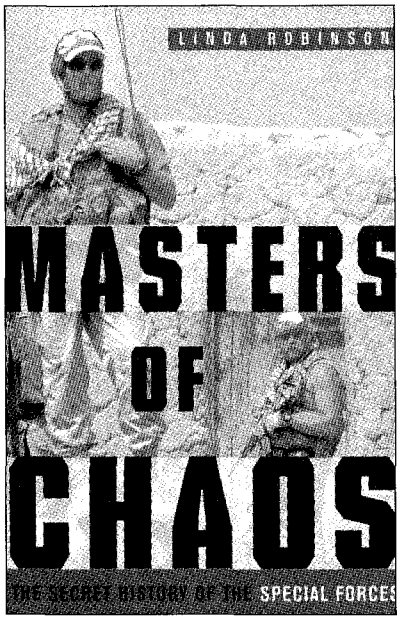
Guerrillas in the Mist

What the Pentagon can learn from the Green Berets.

By Phillip Carter

In America's wars against the al Qaeda terror network and Iraq, few military organizations play as central a role as the U.S. Army's Special Forces. Founded a half-century ago, these "Green Berets"—named for the distinctive headgear they have worn since the Kennedy administration, when the Pentagon dispatched them to fight insurgents in South Vietnam—serve as military trainers, political advisers, and unconventional warriors around the world. The iconic image which has emerged from the Afghan conflict remains that of a Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha—a real life "A Team"—riding into battle on horseback as if a 19th-century cavalry charge, but equipped with 21st-century weapons and satellite communications gear.

But not much is really known about these elite soldiers, who call themselves the "quiet professionals." Special operations exploits rarely make the headlines except when they succeed or fail spectacularly. Military historians, too, tend to focus on conventional forces and battles. *U.S. News & World Report* senior writer Linda Robinson helps to fill the resulting void with *Masters of Chaos*, which offers a rare glimpse inside the secretive world of the Green Berets and their recent adventures. The book pieces together stories from such colorful characters as Chief Warrant Officer Randall "Rawhide" Wurst, whose service record reads like a briefing on the last two decades of U.S. foreign policy, to provide a gripping, if sometimes anecdotal and incomplete, history of Special Forces.



Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces
By Linda Robinson
Public Affairs, $26.00

The Green Berets patterned themselves after the clandestine and guerrilla forces that operated during World War II, such as the commandos of the Office of Strategic Services (forerunner of today's CIA) who conducted missions behind enemy lines and fomented insurgencies in places like Greece after the war. Unlike the Army's Rangers, who trained principally as light infantry "shock troops," the Green Berets focused on unconventional missions, such as training another country's military. The Army's involvement in Vietnam began with the Green Berets, who served as advisers to the South Vietnamese military and later branched out into unconventional warfare missions—the nature of that war making it perfectly suited for such a force. But after America's military withdrawal in 1973, the Army refocused its attention on Europe and the conventional battle it thought it would eventually have to fight there.

Indeed, the Army turned its back on unconventional warfare almost entirely, which nearly meant the end of the Green Berets. But special forces rebuilt themselves as fighting forces, honing their edge in hotspots like El Salvador and the Balkans. Despite their battlefield prowess, the Green Berets have lacked two things essential for any government program—institutional muscle and political support. The Army's top generals nearly all come from the traditional branches of infantry, armor, and artillery. Very few "snake eaters" go on to earn the four stars of a full general, although the Army's current top general grew up in the special forces and once commanded the secretive "Delta Force"—which may explain some of the attention these

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

U.S. Army Green Berets conduct training exercises with the Afghan army in 2002.

Getty Images

units command today. Second, the special forces lack a visible political constituency on Capitol Hill, a problem exacerbated by the relative (and necessary) invisibility of their work.

The most valuable parts of Robinson's book cover the exploits of the Green Berets in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the secret role that a few Special Forces soldiers played in helping the FBI defuse al Qaeda's millennium attacks on the United States in late 1999 and 2000. That mission, classified until now, paired Middle East specialists from the 5th Special Forces Group at Fort Campbell, Ky., with FBI agents working the case in Los Angeles. In part, this was necessitated by the FBI's acute shortage of Arabic speakers. The result was the first counterterrorism mission for Special Forces on U.S. soil in history, which put Green Berets into FBI offices to interpret and analyze Arabic-language materials and translate surveillance of al Qaeda operatives. Federal law prohibits military personnel from being directly involved in law enforcement, so the Green Berets never actually participated in surveillance efforts or other field work. An alert guard on the U.S.-Canada border gets the credit for stopping the actual attack on LAX on the eve of the millennium, but the FBI credits the Green Berets with helping to get the intelligence to dismantle the entire operation.

Before the U.S. campaign in 2001, historians called Afghanistan the "graveyard of empires." Nevertheless, the nation that repelled both British and Soviet invasions fell in just a matter of weeks to a ragtag coalition of Green Berets, Pashtun militias, and Northern Alliance rebels. But the U.S. military also stumbled in Afghanistan, failing both to find al Qaeda's top leadership and to establish lasting order throughout the countryside. For those tasks, it appears, a more robust force must be used. Robinson ascribes the failure to find Osama bin Laden, at least in part, to the shifting loyalties of Afghan fighters working with the U.S. military, but it's not clear that this is the full story. The lack of resources, specifically conventional U.S. forces on the ground, played its part in letting bin Laden slip through America's fingers.

The war in Iraq has entailed the largest deployment of Green Berets since the Vietnam War. Details about some of these missions still remain secret, due to continuing security concerns. But Robinson does go into detail about two of the most important jobs from the major-combat phase of the war—SCUD-busting in the western Iraqi desert and special reconnaissance missions behind enemy lines. It's clear from her account that the Green Berets saw the writing on the wall much earlier than the Bush administration. In early battles with the Fedayeen and through clandestine contacts with Iraqis, Green Beret officers noted many of the warning signs of a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

blooming insurgency: the presence of foreign guerrillas, the widespread availability of weapons and explosives, and a fundamentalist Sunni element willing to wage holy war for control of the country. They also recognized early on the need to co-opt existing security forces—like the Iraqi army—rather than disband them; unfortunately, the soldiers on the ground were overruled by American proconsul Paul Bremer and his superiors in Washington.

Indeed, one SF team saw early in April 2003 just what a menace Moqtada al-Sadr would become to the United States, when he had a moderate Shiite cleric working with the Green Berets killed outside a shrine in Najaf. "As the assassination had shown, the bloodshed [of the war] was far from over," Robinson writes. "Weeks went by and the team had to be ready to turn on a dime from the fence-mending diplomacy to commando-style responses when violence flared." The volatile situation in Najaf would prove a harbinger of the chaos to come. It's not clear from Robinson's book whether the Green Berets' picture of the battlefield made it back to the Pentagon, but even if it did, the United States paid little attention to the intelligence these men gathered first-hand in Iraq.

Because of their cultural competency and close contacts with the people of Iraq, these men learned what the top leaders of the Pentagon did not learn from satellite reconnaissance or conversations with exiled Iraqis like Ahmed Chalabi—that Iraq was a swirling cauldron of hate and violence, waiting for the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime to boil over.

Too few good men

The Green Berets' apparent ability to do everything—from improvising a 21st century cavalry charge to gathering intelligence inside Iraq—has made them the force of choice for the Pentagon. Not surprisingly, both the Bush administration and Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) advocate the expansion of the country's special operations forces. Nonetheless, Robinson sounds a cautionary note about expanding these units too quickly, reminding us of the old Special Forces maxim that "humans are more important than hardware." The capabilities of today's Green Berets owe, in large part, to the last three decades of development and training. Unlike helicopters, tanks, or conventional soldiers, Green Berets cannot simply be purchased, and increasing their ranks too quickly might dilute their quality so much that the Special Forces are no longer that special.

Robinson also hints that several lessons might be drawn from the last two decades of Green Beret operations. One reason the Green Berets do so well in combat is because they do what the CIA and other agencies do not: They learn languages, work to understand and go into war zones to get the information our country needs. Similarly, they can function well either in war or peace. In that sense, they offer a model for every unit in the U.S. Armed Forces; in the best of all worlds, the military would build such special-operations capabilities into every part of the force, both to conserve the elite units' manpower and to ensure that any soldier, whether truck driver or infantryman, can perform under fire.

But the United States has also overused the special forces to the exclusion of other forms of national power, as Dana Priest observed in her brilliant book, *The Mission*. As the military's abilities and influence overseas have expanded, America's abilities to act through diplomacy, intelligence work, and economic policy overseas have atrophied. Though the Green Berets may indeed be "Masters of Chaos," as Robinson writes, the key to U.S. security may be to use all forms of national power—political, economic, military, and moral—to avoid international chaos by helping failed states and reinforcing collective security efforts.

Phillip Carter is a former U.S. Army officer who now writes on national security issues for *The Washington Monthly*.

Now in the Washington MONTHLY Online Edition
www.WashingtonMonthly.com

Read POLITICAL ANIMAL

The Washington Monthly's online edition now focuses on both the month and the moment. Get your fix of real-time reporting, cutting-edge commentary and political analysis—delivered throughout the day in a style that is distinct, incisive, sometimes irreverent, but always entertaining.

Read "Political Animal," where you'll find resident blogger Kevin Drum (formerly of "Calpundit"), joined from time to time by other talented contributors, engaged in lively, informed discourse on a wide—and sometimes wild—variety of topics.

only in the Washington ~~MONTHLY~~ DAILY
www.WashingtonMonthly.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bully Pulpit

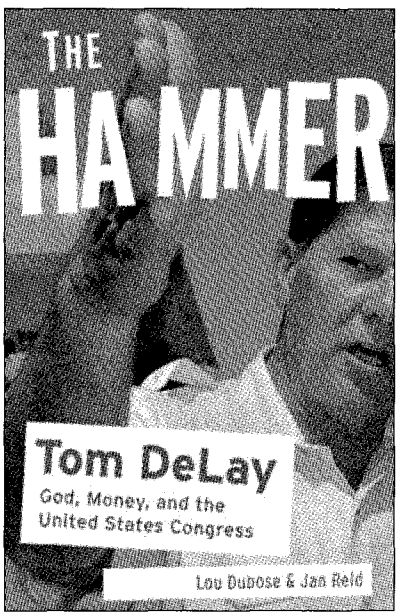
How Tom DeLay changed Washington.

By Jamie Malanowski

It seems more and more possible that the name of Chris Bell will join that of Charles Julius Guiteau on the list of disgruntled office-seekers who helped derail a powerful politician's career. Guiteau, however, merely shot James Garfield, one of our many below-average Buckeye presidents. Chris Bell may end up slaying a dragon.

For those not in the know, Chris Bell is a one-term Texas Democratic congressman who lost his bid for reelection when the Texas legislature gratuitously gerrymandered him into a district where he had to face another (apparently more popular) Democratic incumbent. With his career nipped in the bud, Bell, perhaps humming the "Me and Bobby McGee" lyric about freedom being another word for nothing left to lose, filed a 187-page ethics complaint against Tom DeLay, the powerful House Majority Leader and engineer of the hyper-aggressive redistricting scheme that claimed Bell's seat.

Bell's long-overdue complaint accused DeLay of "bribery, extortion, fraud, money laundering and the abuse of power." In response, the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct has so far rebuked DeLay twice. The first time was for being insufficiently discreet in his influence-peddling ("Geez, Tom, take the time to maintain a veil of hypocrisy, willya?") The second time was for using the Federal Aviation Administration to track down furtive Democratic Texas legislators after they had escaped to Oklahoma in an effort to deny the Republican majority a quorum for the redistricting session in which the state Democratic Party would be sliced and diced to death. (The panel had shown a lot of backbone to this point, but in a prime example of state-of-the-art buck passing, deferred action on another of Bell's complaints, this one alleging illegal corporate fundraising. They are going to wait and see what happens to three DeLay cronies who have been charged with felonies in that matter.)



The Hammer: Tom DeLay: God, Money, and the United States Congress
By Lou Dubose & Jan Reid

Public Affairs, $26.00

Regardless of what else happens—and there hangs in the air the kind of ominous silence that precedes the dropping of the other shoe—Bell's complaint has already inspired House Speaker Dennis Hastert to deliver what will surely prove to be one of the Ten Most Unintentionally Hilarious Comments of the Year. "The worry I have," Hastert told *The New York Times*, "is that you again politicize the process, and it denigrates what ethics is all about."

And surely the name of Tom DeLay should never be associated with any denigration of ethics.

Tom DeLay is the most odious character in American politics today. He does not lack for competition, of course, but what sets him apart is that all of his perversions have been accomplished under the radar screen. Apart from his colorful name "the Hammer," DeLay has no public identity, and even that nickname will more likely inspire people outside the Beltway to think of old jocks like Fred Williamson or Dave Schultz than the beady-eyed former exterminator who terrifies Capitol Hill. It's easy to dislike Dick Cheney; he gets lampooned on "Saturday Night Live." But Darrell Hammond could perform a dead-on impersonation of Tom DeLay, and almost nobody would get the reference. Tom DeLay is a cancer cell, silently metastasizing.

Perhaps *The Hammer: Tom DeLay: God, Money, and United States Congress* will shine a bright spotlight on the nefarious activities of the Majority Leader. Lou Dubose and Jan Reid have calmly, clearly, and pointedly laid out the story of DeLay's rise from an undistinguished Texas legislature backbencher to his current position of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nightmare on K Street

power. They show how DeLay has morphed from a tough whip, admired in the hardball world of Washington politics for his take-no-prisoners approach to party discipline, to a thoroughgoing bully who uses money and capricious, *Scarface*-like gestures to amass more and more and more power.

The most fun to be had from this book will be the arguments it causes about which of DeLay's antics is most scurrilous. Is it his turning over his office to industry lobbyists to write legislation? Is it his innovation of jamming conference committees with loyalists who will pack bills with choice pieces of pork and industry-pleasing amendments? Will it be the way DeLay crazy-cut the district map of Texas to eliminate the possibility of contested elections? Is it his gluttonous fundraising and his naked commerce in political favors? Maybe it's the way he tried to bribe Rep. Nick Smith (R-Mich.) to vote a certain way in exchange for a $100,000 payment to Smith's son's campaign committee.

It's hard to say that any one of these is more shocking than the next, although DeLay's colluding with clothing manufacturers in the Marianas Islands, a U.S. protectorate, to set up unregulated sweatshops is particularly ugly and shameless. DeLay and his benefactors created an industry that enjoyed American trade protection but that operated without American regulations, leaving the workers in virtual servitude.

So swaggering has DeLay become that he even spits on the hands that feed him—the lobbyists. DeLay not only does business with lobbyists, but he has also subsumed them. In one early, tone-setting power play, he discovered that the electronics industry was about to appoint as its chief lobbyist a former Democratic congressman, Dave McCurdy. DeLay told the industry that he didn't approve of its choice. When the association refused to change its selection, DeLay simply yanked off the House calendar an important piece of legislation that the administration, congressional committees, and the industry had been working on for months. The industry group cobbled together a face-saving arrangement, and DeLay put the bill back on the schedule, but a billboard on K Street couldn't have sent the message more clearly. So thoroughly has DeLay taken over the lobbies that now lobbyists actually work for him. You may be, for example, an automotive lobbyist, but when DeLay wants a tobacco bill passed, he gets you to talk to the congressmen from car country.

Politics, as it's been famously said, ain't beanbag, and the list of powerful people, Democrat and Republican, who have advanced personal and special interests over the public interest is long indeed. But it's just not true to say that DeLay is simply engaging in the kind of corruption Democratic leaders succumbed to during their long period in control of Congress. DeLay is a corruptor to a revolutionary degree. As *The Boston Globe* recently reported, conference committees stuffed 3,407 bits of pork barrel legislation into this year's federal budget; in 1994, the last year Democrats controlled the House, 47 projects were added. In 1977-78, 85

Getty Images

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

percent of non-Appropriations legislation was sent to the floor under open rules that permitted amendment; in the DeLay-controlled Congress, only 15 percent had open rules. As *The Hammer* spells out in detail, DeLay subverts the public's business, undermines the rules, perverts ideas of fairness in order to gain even more control of the House, the legislative process, the Republican Party, and national policy. DeLay has not merely maximized the powers of his office; he's not merely the model of the modern martinet; he has eliminated all the customary checks on his power. There are no longer powerful committee chairmen or a group of independent moderates to act as a check; indeed, given the embarrassing redistricting he masterminded in Texas, voters are hardly a check anymore.

As Dubose and Reid explain, DeLay has accumulated all this power not for personal aggrandizement—he lives rather modestly—but to promote his causes, big business, and fundamentalist Christianity. This places DeLay right at the center of two of the most dangerous trends in America today: the rise of corporate society and the fundamentalization of politics. The balance between business and government, between private economic good and the public realm, which produced a standard of living that was the envy of the world, has been radically tilted in favor of business. And, as we have seen, political leaders who are confident in their own righteousness are apt to embark on all kinds of unsound policies. DeLay is not just a tough guy or a cunning guy; DeLay is a power-grabbing radical who wants to undermine the democratic nature of our political institutions and our two-party system. I doubt very much that DeLay will like this book, but as a man who knows something about pest control, I hope events turn out in such a way that he eventually comes to recognize its insecticidal strength.

Jamie Malanowski is a New York writer.

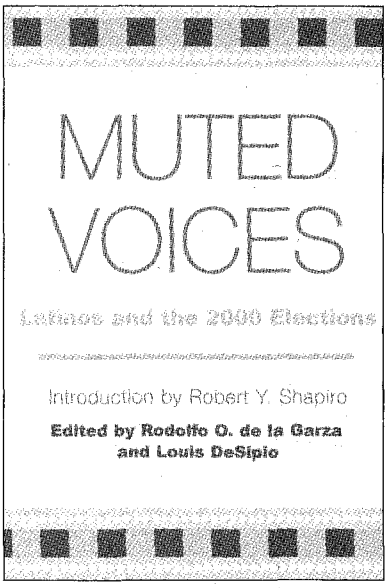
Bloc Patrol

Maybe there's no such thing as the "Latino vote."

By Steve Cieslewicz

It has become an article of faith in this presidential election campaign that the Latino vote is an elusive prize that could catapult to victory the candidate or party that manages to capture it. If you watched either of the political conventions on television this summer, you heard as much Spanish spoken as on a typical hour of "Sesame Street" (though the content of the appeals wasn't much more substantial than "A is for Agua.") At 39 million and growing, Latinos now account for 13 percent of the U.S. population and have all the makings of a formidable electoral constituency. While it leans heavily Democratic, the Latino vote is still in-play, unlike its more established cousin, the Black vote—which consistently gives 90 percent to Democrats. In a close election, many political observers and strategists are convinced that the votes of Latinos alone could determine the outcome.

They just might be right. To listen to Rodolfo O. de la Garza and Louis DeSipio, however, this potential bonanza of votes remains untapped. Since 1988, the two political scientists have tracked the role of Latinos in U.S. politics, and they have released their latest findings, *Muted Voices: Latinos and the 2000 Elections*, just in time for the 2004 election. As the title indicates, the authors—and their 17 collaborators in this collection of essays—argue that Latino interests and concerns are largely neglected by political parties and candidates even as the media focus on them continues to increase.



Muted Voices: Latinos and the 2000 Elections
By Rodolfo O. de la Garza & Louis DeSipio
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, $29.95

Muted Voices looks broadly at recent campaign efforts to target Latinos and, in classic academic fashion, uses a series of case studies from high Latino population states such as Arizona, Texas, California, and New York to make predictions about the influence of Latino voters in future elections.

Two dominant arguments are maintained through the essays of *Muted Voices*. The first posits that Latinos cast ballots as a bloc and therefore constitute a singular, identifiable Latino vote. And the second maintains that in order to successfully court this bloc, a political party must both project a "welcoming image" and promote a package of issues

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

targeted specifically to the community. These academics contend that there is a political philosophy that is unique and comprehensive in its appeal to the Latino electorate—and one that primarily, if not solely, revolves around the concept of being Latino.

Both of these assumptions are deeply flawed. And they are undercut by evidence from the book itself, as well as by opinion polls of Latinos that depict a diverse constituency that looks much more like the broader, diverse American electorate than like a distinct voting bloc.

Although a number of these essays describe examples of Latino outreach efforts at the state level, collectively they fail to elucidate what a "welcoming image" looks like, and fail to identify Latino political interests and concerns that are fundamentally distinct from those of other Americans. Noting that the issues most important to Latinos tend to be the same ones other voters are worried about, the authors admit, "Most Latino leaders interviewed for this study rejected the idea that it was a unique 'Latino agenda.' According to the respondents, the issues are similar for Latinos and non-Latinos: health care, quality education, and safe neighborhoods."

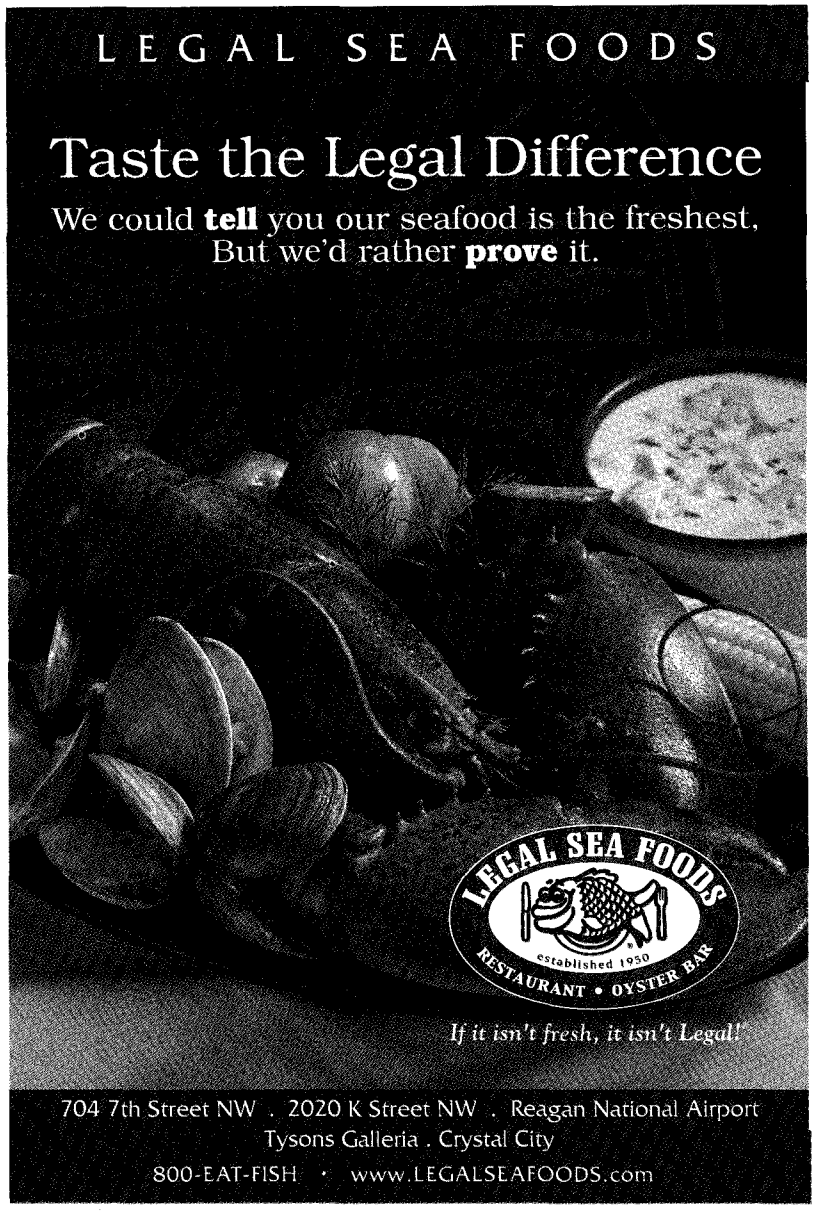
Likewise, while contributor Robert Marbut cites the work of Lionel Sosa, the 2000 Bush campaign point man to Latinos, as an example of successful outreach, Sosa's strategy was based on emphasizing five traits—optimism, empathy, strength, leadership, and inclusiveness—of which only the last could charitably be interpreted as appealing uniquely to Latinos. In addition, while some of the essays seek to explain George W. Bush's unique appeal to Latino voters., Ronald Reagan did better in this ethnic group.

The reasons for Bush's lack of support among Latinos aren't very different from those responsible for his decline in popularity in general. According to a 2004 poll by the Pew Hispanic Center and the Kaiser Family Foundation, the majority of registered Latino voters disapprove of Bush's handling of Iraq and do not believe he has a clear plan to succeed there. They are indifferent to his 2001 tax cuts. And finally, the majority of Latinos believe that religion should be kept out of political discussions and that abortion should be legal—two views that undercut the cultural affinity Bush was supposed to have with these largely Catholic voters.

This is not to say that the Latino electorate will not lean more Republican in the future. But if it does, that change will likely be due to a shift in demographics and a change in socio-economic status for Latinos, not Republican efforts to appeal to "Latino concerns." Only 34 percent of registered Latino voters between the ages of 18 and 29 identify themselves as Democratic, compared to 64 percent of those 55 and older, a sign that the Democrats' current two-to-one advantage at the polls may come to an end within a generation. In addition, according to the Pew Hispanic Center, Latino Republicans tend "to have higher incomes and are more likely to be foreign-born than Latino Democrats." As Latinos in the United States continue to assimilate and climb the economic ladder, their voting patterns may change as well.

The admission that Latinos cannot be easily categorized as a unified voting bloc motivated by a list of hot-button political issues might obviate the need for a few panels at American Political Science Association meetings and call into question the existence of the academic specialty of Latino voter scholarship. But it might be a more accurate reflection of the role Latinos play in U.S. elections.

Steve Cieslewicz is a writer in Chicago.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MEANWHILE in AMERICA

by Joe Sacco ©2004

The Pew Research Center! The Harris Interactive! Gallup! Zogby! All through September their hourly polls have crashed on us, bringing ever-worsening news from "likely voters."

MARGINS OF ERROR NOTWITHSTANDING, WE IN THE KERRY CAMP APPEAR IN FOR A SOAKING.

KERRY EDWARDS

Even my own hopelessly small, hardly scientific, highly skewed poll of "definite Kerry voters" (ie., my friends) had been demoralizing.

WHO DO YOU THINK WILL WIN?

BUSH. IT'S A DONE DEAL.

BUSH. ALL HE HAS TO DO IS TURN ON THAT SOUTHERN ACCENT.

BUSH. BUSH. BUSH.

Now, with anxiety bordering on panic, a group of us gathers to witness the campaign's first presidential debate. Lara and Rich bring over a bottle of wine, and so do I, but, fittingly, my girlfriend Amalie serves martinis.

I'M SO DEPRESSED.

Indeed, ever since the Republican Convention, we've been "shaken" by Bush and "not stirred" by Kerry.

Before we can toast St. Jude, the patron saint of lost causes, the debate begins!

Nervous Sarcasm Phase: Frustrated by Kerry's losing campaign, we vent our anger on the ascendant Bush...

LOOK HOW SHORT HE IS NEXT TO KERRY.

HE'S ACTING LIKE A TEN YEAR OLD.

"IT'S HARD WORK." HE LOVES THAT LINE.

Relief Phase: Increasingly heartened by Kerry's sober performance, we note the blinking and pouting of the "War President."

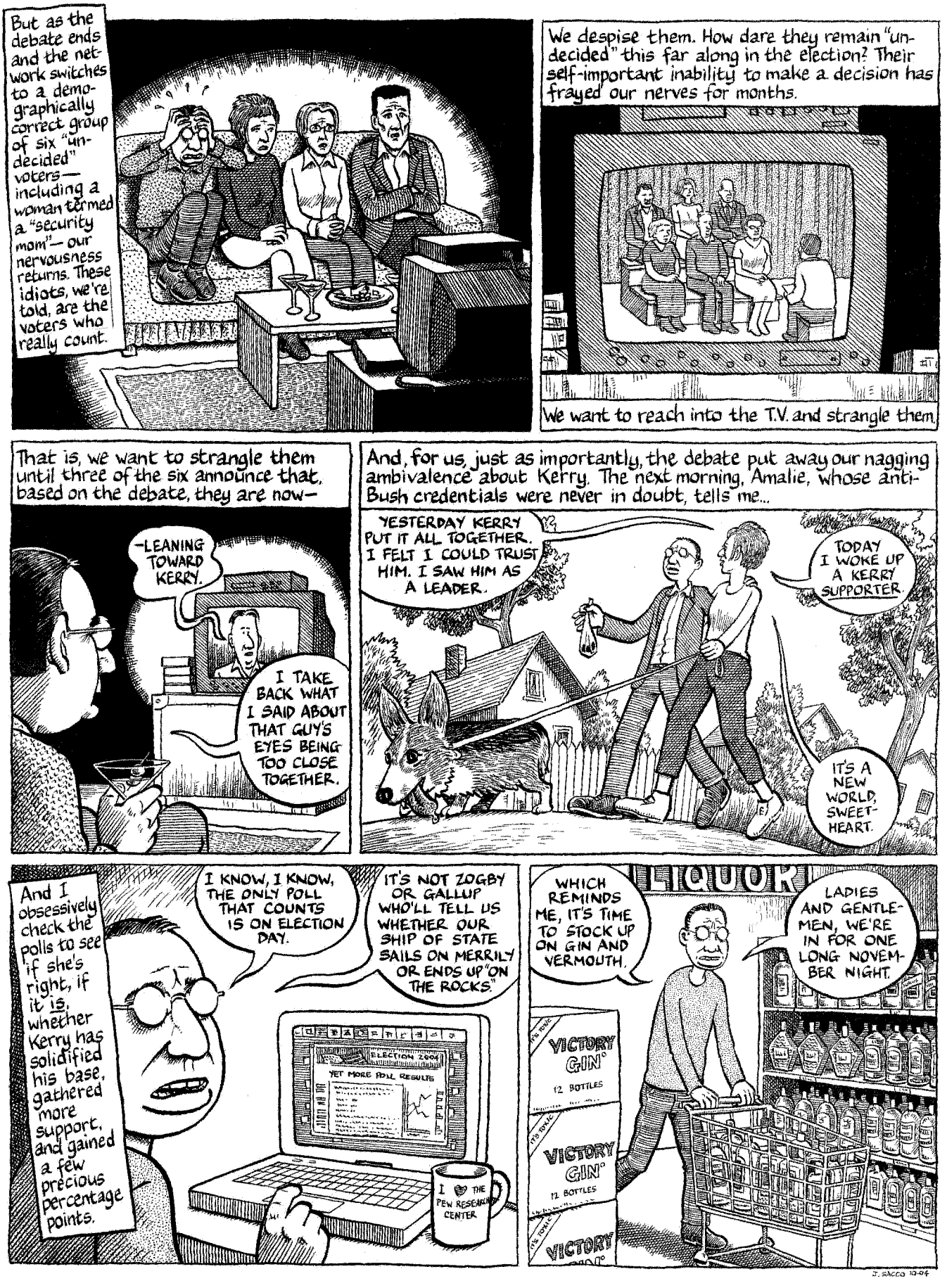
GOOD POINT!

HEH HEH... THAT GOT BUSH SQUIRMING.

Premature Celebration Phase: Now toying with the notion that Kerry has half a chance in November after all, we call for another round.

J. SACCO 10-04

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It's hard to know what to believe.

"I was never told about the risks. I trusted my son's doctor when she said an anti-depressant would help him cope with his new school."

Companies hid research showing that their anti-depressant pills doubled the risk of suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts among children. The FDA hasn't yet decided what to tell parents and is now checking for similar study findings for adults. We believe you have a right to know about all of the potential risks – and what they mean for you and people you love.

When companies spend billions for research and ads to sell their products, the **National Research Center for Women & Families** is here to help you cut through the hype and understand the facts. Our mission: to give you information that is based on research and geared toward action. We fight for programs and policies that improve the lives of women, children and families – all kinds of families – everyday.

For free information on a wide range of issues that you care about, visit our website at **www.center4research.org**.

We need your help to do our work. We hope you will add us to your list of worthy causes online, by check, or by designating #7693 for the Combined Federal Campaign and writing in our name for United Way.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED